

IMAGES OF EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY IN EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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I certify that this thesis was composed and completed by myself during the course of my own individual research.

Simon Coates 1994.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to indicate the importance attached to the episcopate within the early Anglo-Saxon Church and the diverse manner in which episcopal authority was defined. It explores the reason why the role, function and authority of bishops concerned both bishops themselves and others within the Church, and the purposes to which texts defining and describing the conduct of bishops were put.

One purpose of the study is to seek to reassess the historical problem of the Christianisation and transformation of early Anglo-Saxon society. This transformation altered the structure of the way in which people thought about their lives. The figure of the bishop became one means by which this transformation could be explored, explained and understood. The episcopate became a locus of authority within a newly Christianised world. The extent to which texts concerned with defining episcopal authority used and explored models and ideas derived from earlier Christian tradition is explored.

The introduction establishes some of the parameters of the thesis and shows how a monastic bias has been injected into the study of early Anglo-Saxon history by the writings of Bede and the Tenth-Century monastic reformers. An opening chapter analyses the sources used: hagiography, the writings of Bede and the decrees of church councils. It stresses in particular the need to approach hagiographical sources from a theological perspective. Chapter two delineates Bede's conception of the Church as an episcopal institution and shows the manner in which he was concerned to portray the conversion of the English people largely through the work of bishops. It also discusses the functions which Bede expected bishops to perform. Chapter three also on Bede focusses upon the manner in which, as a monastic writer, he conceived the ideal bishop to be both a pastor and a solitary heavily influenced by ascetic and monastic conceptions of the episcopal office. He sought to convey how the episcopate came to terms with a number of varying ascetic traditions. The place occupied by the miraculous in forming Bede's conceptions of the episcopal office is then examined.

The following chapter on Stephanus' Life of Wilfrid emphasises the manner in which the text located Wilfrid's episcopal authority in his ability to suffer and overcome persecution and to act as a lawgiver. A study of Alcuin's Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Eboricensis Ecclesiae and its portrayal of episcopal authority forms the subject of chapter five. This shows how Alcuin utilised episcopal figures to proclaim and develop the civic unity of York as a metropolitan see. By describing the acts of episcopal piety and benefaction performed by the bishops of York, Alcuin sought to mould and guide public opinion in support of the episcopal hierarchy providing an image of the ideal bishop as the first citizen of an urban community. The final chapter focusses upon the self-image of the episcopate found within ecclesiastical legislation. It compares and contrasts the self-image of the episcopate with images of episcopal authority created by churchmen outside episcopal office stressing how the episcopal and monastic vocations were separated rather than combined in the decrees of church councils, Theodore's Penitential and Egbert of York's Dialogues. A conclusion draws out comparisons and contrasts emphasising that the images of episcopal authority created by various authors were closely related to the background, milieu and concerns of the authors themselves and indicating the diverse manner in which episcopal authority was defined and articulated in the early

Anglo-Saxon Church.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ASC</u>	<u>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</u>
BCS	W.de.G. Birch ed., <u>Cartularium Saxonicum</u> , 3 vols. (London, 1885-93).
<u>BKSY</u>	Alcuin, <u>The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York</u> , ed. P. Godman (Oxford, 1982).
CCSL	<u>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</u> (Turnhout, 1953-).
CLA	<u>Codices Latini Antiquiores</u> , ed. E.A. Lowe, 12 vols. (Oxford, 1934-72).
CSEL	<u>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</u> (Vienna).
Dümmler	<u>Epistolae Karolini Aevi, II</u> , ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epist. 4 (Berlin, 1919).
EHD	<u>English Historical Documents I, c.500-1042</u> , ed. D. Whitelock (2nd edn, London, 1979).
Ehwald	<u>Aldhelmi Opera</u> , ed. R. Ehwald, MGH AA 15 (Berlin, 1919).
<u>HA</u>	Bede, <u>Historia Abbatum</u> , in <u>Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica</u> , ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), Vol. I, pp.364-404.
<u>HE</u>	Bede, <u>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</u> , ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors (Oxford, 1969).
HS	A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, <u>Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland</u> 3 vols. (Oxford, 1869-78).
MGH	<u>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</u>
AA	Auctores Antiquissimi
Cap.	Capitularia
Conc.	Concilia
Epist.	Epistolae
PLAC.	Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini
SRG <i>in usum scholarum</i>	Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum

scholarum separatim editi

SRM

Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum

SS

Scriptores

- PL Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris 1844-64).
- RS Rolls Series
- S P.H. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography (London, 1968).
- SC Sources Chrétiennes, ed. H. de Lubac *et al* (Paris, 1942-).
- Settimane Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto).
- Tangl Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus, ed. M. Tangl (Berlin, 1916).
- VCA Anonymous Life of Saint Cuthbert, in B. Colgrave, Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert (Cambridge, 1940).
- VCM Bede, Vita S. Cuthberti Metrica, ed. W. Jaager, Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti Palaestra 198 (Leipzig 1935).
- VCP Bede's Prose Life of Saint Cuthbert, in B. Colgrave, Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert (Cambridge, 1940).
- VW Eddius Stephanus Vita Wilfridi, in B. Colgrave, The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus (Cambridge, 1927).

A NOTE ON CITATION OF SOURCES

Citations from Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum are given by book and chapter number from Colgrave and Mynors' edition edited for Oxford Medieval Texts in 1969. Citations from the various Vitae of Cuthbert, Bede's Historia Abbatum and Eddius Stephanus' Vita Wilfridi are given by chapter number from Colgrave's editions. Citations to charters are either taken from Sawyer's handbook or from Birch's edition and are given by number. Citations from Alcuin's Versus de Patribus Regibus et Sanctis Eboricensis Ecclesiae are given by line number from the edition edited by Peter Godman for Oxford Medieval Texts in 1982. Where quotations are of some length I have largely given the original Latin in a footnote. Biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version.

PREFACE

Many early Anglo-Saxon bishops were preoccupied with the need to maintain a proper balance between the active and contemplative lives. Similarly in the solitude of their studies historians recognise a need to interact with the outside world. In the course of researching and writing this thesis I have incurred many debts and made many friends. The British Academy granted me a postgraduate award to undertake my research and the University of Edinburgh helped to sustain me financially by offering me a Teaching Assistantship. The staff of various libraries have helped me with enquiries. In Edinburgh I have been helped by the inter-library loans department of Edinburgh University Library and particularly by the friendly librarians of the National Library of Scotland who have been most helpful. The staff of New College Library very kindly lent me copies of Bede's commentaries and various other texts in the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina series for lengthy periods. Elsewhere I have been helped by St Andrews University Library, the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the British Library.

I owe a large debt to my supervisor, Dr Tom Brown, who kindly allowed me to explore my topic according to my own interests whilst offering helpful advice, friendship and encouragement. John Stephens who initially acted as my assistant supervisor brought to my topic keen insight and much needed wit. Gary Dickson, Michael Angold, Anthony Goodman, Graeme Small and Angus Mackay have also offered encouragement, help, advice and rewarding distraction. David Wright helped me to understand the early Church and to improve my latinity. Matthew Bliss and Bruce MacDonald did the same as well as offering me stimulating discussion about theological topics and pointing me in a number of directions. The various members

of EMERGE (Early Medieval Europe Research Group) have provided an outlet in which to discuss Early Medieval History in very congenial surroundings and a means of avoiding the solitude common to many postgraduate students. In particular I would like to thank Simon Gordon, Judith George who helped me learn about Venantius Fortunatus, Stuart Airlie, Allan Hood, Tom Clancy, Roger Collins, Judith McClure, Marilyn Dunn and Elizabeth Redgate.

Parts of this thesis were initially presented in the form of seminar papers. Chapter six was first presented in a shorter form to the Denys Hay Seminar at the University of Edinburgh where I was helped by the advice and comments of many of the above. The germ of chapter four was presented at the EMERGE conference on Early Medieval Bishops held in February 1992. Here I was helped by the comments of Robert Markus and also wish to thank Catherine Cubitt for the helpful advice she gave me during the conference and for encouraging and helping me at an early stage of my research. The second part of chapter three, dealing with Bede's presentation of miracles in relation to the episcopate, is to be published as an article in the Downside Review.

I also wish to record with grateful thanks how other people have patiently with much enthusiasm, wit, and encouragement listened to my requests, anxieties and ideas. In particular I should mention Graham Marshall who helped me develop some semblance of computer literacy, Chris Gardner who read portions of my work and asked me for advice on his own, Emma Vincent who did the same, Sharon Adams who made me panic by asking me to chair a conference on Scottish History, Alastair Millar, Andy Thomas and Martin Crowther. James Philip has helped me to keep my mind and heart on the right things and has shown a consistent interest in my work.

David and Mary Stay have supported me with unfailing enthusiasm. Others who deserve a mention for their support and encouragement include Fiona Scott, Judith Iles, Callum McKellar, James Bewick, Jim Buick, Emmanouella Sakeillon, Glenn Harvey and Michelle Grist. David Bartos, a polymath if ever there was one, accompanied me on a tour of English ecclesiastical sites and has consistently listened to my ideas and given me many of his own.

My debt to my immediate family has been enormous and may have often seemed unacknowledged. My father first stimulated me to study Medieval History by taking me to Chinon when I was six. Our subsequent family holidays always included plenty of castles and abbeys and he has further helped me with computer problems. All of my family have helped me by their encouragement and support. Sadly my mother died from cancer a year after I began to work on my research. This thesis is therefore dedicated to her as a small token of love and affection to one who gave me so much of hers.

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PENTECOST 1994.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns itself with a select number of people, among them a man who developed a close relationship with aquatic mammals, entertained an angel, stood up to his waist in cold water and, after his death, became the most important saint of Northern England; a man who amassed huge amounts of wealth, argued with almost everybody, vigorously adhered to the customs of the Roman Church and travelled extensively, and an aged Greek who became the most influential early archbishop of Canterbury. The thesis seeks to discover the importance attached to the episcopate within the early Anglo-Saxon Church, the reason why the role, function and authority of bishops concerned both bishops themselves and others within the Church, and the purposes to which texts that defined and described the conduct of bishops were put.

One particular historiographical problem faced by those who study early Anglo-Saxon England and indeed early medieval societies in general concerns the uneven nature of the literary source material. This material is uneven in a series of spheres. It is affected by the geographical and intellectual milieu within which it was produced, by the audience to whom it was addressed and by chronological disparities. As a result any analysis of the early Anglo-Saxon Church is thus compelled to use particular case studies as paradigms. A systematic analysis of the life and career of every bishop within this Church cannot be written but general comments about the place and importance of the episcopate within early Anglo-Saxon cultural and ecclesiastical life can be made. The thesis thus seeks to be an exercise in interpretation rather than a general narrative or descriptive history of the early

Anglo-Saxon episcopate. It is concerned to modify the emphasis that previous research has placed upon the importance of monasticism within the early Anglo-Saxon Church by suggesting that the episcopate needs to be returned to the centre of the picture. It seeks to place new wine into old wineskins. It is often forgotten that it was not only with the tenth-century monastic reform movement that monastic bishops became common within Anglo-Saxon England. The most important monastic figures within the early Anglo-Saxon Church such as Cuthbert and Wilfrid were also bishops who figured prominently in public affairs.

One of the purposes of this study is to seek to reassess the historical problem of the Christianisation and transformation of early Anglo-Saxon society. This transformation resulted in the establishment and consolidation of monasteries and episcopal sees within England, the conversion of kings and the gradual Christianisation of the populace. Yet the transformation took place not merely within the institutional and material structure of Anglo-Saxon society but also within peoples' minds. It altered the structure of the way in which people thought about their lives. It is arguable that the figure of the bishop became one means by which this transformation could be explored, explained and understood. Ideas about the episcopate became a means of defining authority within a newly Christianised world. They provided an idiom through which ideas and concerns about ecclesiastical authority came to be articulated. The study thus concerns itself less with topographical details concerning the extent and distribution of particular episcopal sees and the physical structure of the early Anglo-Saxon Church and more with the attitudes and assumptions of early Anglo-Saxon society. It focusses more upon ideals

than upon reality, recognising that the creation of an image of the ideal bishop was a fundamental part of the mental framework of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. As Jacques Le Goff has written.

the life of men and societies depends just as much on images as it does on more palpable realities. All mental images are important not just the iconographic and the artistic. The images of interest to the historian are collective images as they are shaped, changed and transformed by the vicissitudes of history. They are expressed in words and themes. They are bequeathed in traditions, borrowed from one civilisation by another, and circulated among the various classes and societies of men.¹

The Christianisation of early Anglo-Saxon society brought with it the written word. This allowed the Church to generate images and impressions of its role within the newly transformed society. Episcopal authority was dependent upon language. Literary forms were used to enhance, define and formulate the nature of episcopal activity. Language was the means by which holiness could be represented and explored because it was the instrument which brought human beings closer to God. One theme which the thesis therefore seeks to explore, in a more modest form than has been done elsewhere, is that of the function and use of the written word within Anglo-Saxon society.²

¹ J. Le Goff, The Medieval Imagination (Chicago, 1988), p.5.

² S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word', in The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp.36-63 and S. Keynes, 'Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England', in *Ibid.*, pp.226-257 illustrate some central aspects of the debate about the interaction of oral and literary culture in early Anglo-Saxon England. See also J.J. Morrish, 'An Examination of Literacy and Learning in England in the Ninth Century', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1982); P. Wormald, 'The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its Neighbours', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th ser. 27 (1977), pp.95-114.

Power was connected to the use of the written word, literacy was, 'a mentality, a form of ideology through which power could be constructed and influence exerted, a frame of mind and a framer of minds.'³ Orality was not superseded by the written word but rather complemented by it. Written texts conveyed and preserved information which had often been communicated orally. The written word interacted with other forms of human discourse. This raises questions about the extent to which texts describing the activities of the episcopate were read and understood particularly by the laity. The whole issue of literacy is further complicated with regard to the case of Anglo-Saxon England due to the fact that the language which the written word interacted with was not a Latin based one as was similarly the case in Brittany and Germany. In a important study, Jacques Le Goff explored the relationship in the early Middle Ages between official ecclesiastical culture and folkloric culture and concluded that there was a fundamental dichotomy between these two cultures and mentalities.⁴ Many assume, in part influenced by this model and the work of scholars such as Jean-Claude Schmitt, that the early Anglo-Saxon Church was overwhelmingly aristocratic in character and attempt to define an autonomous elite culture which, through the activities of bishops and clerics, imposed

³ R. McKitterick, 'Conclusion', in Id., ed., The Uses of Literacy, p.320.

⁴ J. Le Goff, 'Clerical culture and folkloric traditions in Medieval Civilisation', in Id., Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1980), pp.153-58.

itself upon the culture of passive congregations.⁵ This study will attempt to touch upon this theme in an attempt to consider how far texts and the ideas they articulated evolved from an interaction between 'elite' and 'popular' culture and how far the polarity between written and oral is valid.

The conversion and Christianisation of the Anglo-Saxons was not an overnight affair. It was a slow, incomplete and sometimes reversible process of religious and social change. One set of assumptions, attitudes and beliefs was not automatically replaced by another. Pagan and Germanic culture did not disappear but rather interacted with Christian culture to produce a distinctive and complex mental world. The strands of this world have been unpicked and defined but cannot and indeed should not be fully separated. Works produced in a Christian context appropriated secular ideology and absorbed elements which were commonly considered pagan for their own ends. Sanctity did not merely lie within an ecclesiastical sphere it could also be found within secularity.⁶ Bishops therefore were in part shown to interact

⁵ J.-C. Schmitt, "Religion populaire" et "culture folklorique", Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations 31 (1976), pp.941-53; Id., The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century, trans. M. Thom (Cambridge, 1983), pp.122-3; M. Lauwers, "Religion populaire", culture folklorique, mentalités: notes pour une anthropologie culturelle du moyen âge', Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 82 (1987), pp.221-58; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (Oxford, 1983), p.78. This model has been criticised in J.M.H. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany, c.850-1250', Speculum 65 (1990), pp.309-343. The aristocratic nature of the Anglo-Saxon Church is highlighted in two studies on saints cults, D.W. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), esp. ch.4; S. Ridyard, The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults (Cambridge, 1988), esp. p.236.

⁶ P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy', in Bede and Anglo-Saxon England, ed. R.T. Farrell (British

with and adapt to secular concerns.

The history of the Christianisation of early Anglo-Saxon society cannot be viewed in monolithic terms and the nature and character of the Anglo-Saxon Church reduced to a series of simple generalisations. It has, however, largely been held captive by historiography which attempts to perform such an operation. Historical analysis of early Anglo-Saxon Christian culture has long been dominated by interpretations which emphasise the importance of the monastic character of the Church. This view has almost hardened into an orthodoxy largely due to the impact and pervasive influence exerted by the writings of Bede on later historians. Since Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica provided the most comprehensive account of early English religious institutions found in any single text written before the twelfth century, his monastic perceptions and milieu until recently created a largely standardised and distorted impression of the early Anglo-Saxon Church and also of the place of monasticism within it. Recent work has described and explored the limitations of Bede stressing the need to realise the ideological agenda which formulated and conditioned his writing and consequently the need to use alternative sources to illumine aspects of ecclesiastical life which he left undiscussed.⁷ However,

Archaeological Reports, British series 46, 1978), pp.32-95, unearths a buried secular, aristocratic culture. For a Carolingian parallel see S. Airlie, 'The Anxiety of Sanctity: St Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 43 (1992), pp.372-395.

⁷ Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf"' notes the limitations of analysing early Anglo-Saxon society merely by use of Bede and uses Beowulf and other Germanic literature as an alternative focus. Bede has been analysed in relation to other Northumbrian sources most notably by W. Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid', in The Narrators of Barbarian History (Princeton, 1988), pp.235-328 and also in 'The Historia Ecclesiastica: Bede's Agenda and Ours', Haskins Society Journal 2 (1990),

despite perceptions that Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica was primarily concerned with bishops, no systematic study of the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate and its functions has been undertaken.⁸

The monastic bias evident in the study of much early Anglo-Saxon history is also a result not only of Bede but of the impact of the tenth-century monastic reformation. In the tenth century, concern over the manner in which the monastic life was organised and regulated led to a centrally organised reform of monastic houses in Wessex and the Midlands under the active support and patronage of the English monarchy particularly during the reign of King Edgar (959-75).⁹ Anglo-Saxon

pp.29-45; C.W. Jones, Saint's Lives and Chronicles in Early England (Ithaca, 1947). Note also P. Wormald, Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence (Jarrow Lecture, 1984).

⁸ For comment on the episcopal concerns of Bede see for example J. Campbell, 'The Debt of the Early English Church to Ireland', in Irland und die Christenheit, eds. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1984), p.337, where he writes, 'In his Ecclesiastical History, Bede was particularly concerned with bishops.'; Id., 'Bede I' and 'Bede II', in his Essays in Anglo-Saxon History (London, 1986), pp.1-48; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede and Plummer', in his Early Medieval History (Oxford, 1975), pp.76-95 repr. in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.366-85.

⁹ On this movement see R.R. Darlington, 'Ecclesiastical Reform in the Late Old English Period', English Historical Review 51 (1936), pp.385-428; F.M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1971), ch.13; J.A. Robinson, The Times of St Dunstan (Oxford, 1923) and the essays in Tenth-Century Studies, ed. D. Parsons (London and Chichester, 1975). The movement has recently been analysed in a number of works dealing with its chief ecclesiastical protagonists: Aethelwold, Dunstan and Oswald. See Bishop Aethelwold: His Career and Influence, ed. B. Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988); St Dunstan. His, Life, Times and Cult, ed. N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge, 1992) and the forthcoming volume arising from the papers given at the 1992 conference on St Oswald held at Worcester. It has recently been stressed that the antecedents of this movement should be seen in King Alfred's policies by D. Dumville, 'King Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform

society was characteristically backward-looking. The monastic reformers such as Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester (963-984) therefore justified their creation of monastic cathedrals and concern to universally regulate monastic life in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict by means of an appeal to the past. This appeal largely looked to early Northumbria and the authority of Bede's writings.¹⁰

The writings of Bede provided the monastic reformers with literary *topoi* which they could use to justify their own policies, methods and concerns. The reign of Edgar was perceived to mark the recovery of a golden age in ecclesiastical life which had existed in the seventh and eighth centuries. The reformers therefore did not see their insistence on the imposition of the Rule of St Benedict as innovatory but rather as an act of restoration. A number of key texts of the monastic reform movement were influenced by Bede's writings particularly his letter to Bishop Egbert of York. The Regularis Concordia, the code of observance of the monastic reform movement drawn up by the reformers at a synod summoned by King Edgar and held in Winchester c.972, quoted from this letter when it authorised that monks of a cathedral monastery should elect a bishop from their own number in the same way as monks of an ordinary monastery elected their abbot. If no one suitable could be

of the English Church', in Id., Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar (Woodbridge, 1992), pp.185-205.

¹⁰ P. Wormald, 'Aethelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast', in Bishop Aethelwold: His Career and Influence, pp.37-42. Wormald also notes the peculiarly English character of monastic cathedrals (p.37). A.T. Thacker, 'Aethelwold and Abingdon', in Ibid., pp.53-54, 62-63. A. Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity during the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon monasticism', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 40 (1989), pp.159-207, esp. pp.160-170.

found they were authorised to choose a monk from another monastery.¹¹ Furthermore the prologue to the Regularis Concordia shows that the author probably read the Responsiones of Gregory the Great found in Bede's Ecclesiastical History. It claimed that the reformers summoned monks from the reformed monasteries of Fleury and Ghent because they called to mind 'the letters in which our holy patron Gregory instructed the blessed Augustine that for the advancement of the rude English Church, he should establish therein the seemly customs of the Gallic Churches as well as those of Rome.'¹²

Further texts associated with the monastic reform movement also utilised Bede's writings. Two more or less authentic texts concerning the monastic foundations at Ely and Peterborough refer explicitly to Bede. Both of these texts had connections with Aethelwold.¹³ The first section of the document known as An Old English account of King Edgar's establishment of monasteries commonly attributed to the authorship of Aethelwold quoted from Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica when it recounted the establishment of Christianity in England through the impact of Gregory the Great's mission.¹⁴ This document survives in only one early twelfth-century

¹¹ Regularis Concordia, ed. T. Symons (London, 1953), p.6; Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, p.413; Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity', p.166.

¹² Regularis Concordia, p.3; Bede, HE I.27; Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity', p.165.

¹³ S 779, 782; Wormald, 'Aethelwold and his Continental Counterparts', p.40.

¹⁴ An Old English account of King Edgar's establishment of monasteries, in Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church 871-1204, ed. D. Whitelock, R. Brett, C.N.L. Brooke (Oxford, 1981), vol.1, pp.142-154 at pp.143-145. Its account is based on Bede, HE I.23-6, 33; II.1. On Aethelwold's

manuscript where it immediately follows the Old English translation of the Rule of Saint Benedict made by Aethelwold.¹⁵ The manuscript is incomplete. After the discussion of the establishment of Christianity in England it contains a lacuna and begins again with an account of the reforming activity of Edgar's reign. It is thought that the missing part dealt with the decline of monasticism following the age of Bede before the monasteries were restored to their former glory and a return to the Golden Age of Bede was inaugurated.¹⁶ In appealing to the pre-Viking past the Benedictine reformers therefore created a picture of it as an age of uniformity which was 'all of a piece and all monastic.'¹⁷ This had a two-fold effect. It both ignored the nature of episcopal communities and also injected further bias into Anglo-Saxon history by ignoring the fluidity and diversity within early Anglo-Saxon monasticism. It suggested that the Rule of Saint Benedict was the standard rule by which monks regulated their lives in the early Anglo-Saxon period when in actuality the Benedictine Rule was merely one rule among many. It further suggested that monks could be easily separated from the secular clergy and that monasteries were in need of reform because they had fallen away from strictly Benedictine standards.

authorship see D. Whitelock, 'The authorship of the account of King Edgar's establishment of monasteries', in Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt, ed. J.L. Rosier (The Hague, 1970), pp.125-36.

¹⁵ London, British Library, MS. Cotton Faustina A. X, fols. 148r-151v. On Aethelwold's translation of the Rule of St Benedict see M. Gretsch, 'Aethelwold's Translation of the Regula Sancti Benedicti and its Latin Exemplar', Anglo-Saxon England 3 (1974), pp.125-51.

¹⁶ Councils and Synods, ed. D. Whitelock et al., vol.1, p.145, n.3.

¹⁷ Thacker, 'Aethelwold and Abingdon', p.63.

Recently early Anglo-Saxon monasticism has been reassessed and the generalisations of the tenth-century monastic reformers have been criticised and exposed.¹⁸ It has been shown how the leaders of the reform movement utilised propaganda.¹⁹ They sought to justify their imposition of the Rule of Saint Benedict on religious communities by enshrining as historical truth the idea that there was a uniform concept of Benedictinism governing the organisation of monastic houses and that there were monastic cathedrals in the eighth century. Their espousal of this view passed into later works written by Benedictine historians. William of Malmesbury accepted the view that the early Anglo-Saxon cathedral at Canterbury was staffed by monks and not secular priests. He described Oda as the first archbishop of Canterbury not to be in monastic orders and also stressed that at least since the time of Archbishop Laurence there had always been monks at Canterbury.²⁰ Gervase of Canterbury specified that the seventh- and eighth- century archbishops had been monks before their election.²¹ This picture of the history of Anglo-Saxon monasticism provided by Aethelwold and subsequently by the second generation of monastic reformers was accepted by David Knowles who believed that early Anglo-

¹⁸ S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters 597-900', (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990), ch.1; Id., 'What was an early Anglo-Saxon Monastery?', in Monastic Studies, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, 1990), pp.48-57; P. Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature in Western England (Cambridge, 1990), pp.115-7.

¹⁹ Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity', pp.169-70.

²⁰ William of Malmesbury, De Gestis pontificum Anglorum, I.14 and 20, ed. N.E.S.A. Hamilton (RS, London, 1870), pp.21 and 32.

²¹ Gervase of Canterbury, Actus Pontificum, ed. W. Stubbs (RS, London, 1880), pp.338, 344.

Saxon monastic houses were Benedictine in spirit if not in fact.²²

In order to justify their establishment of new Benedictine monasteries and imposition of monastic uniformity on Anglo-Saxon monastic life the reformers made strong accusations against the clerical communities which the reformed monasteries came to replace. They pejoratively used the term *clericus* to describe members of religious communities synonymous with lasciviousness and religious decay in order to justify such actions as the expulsion of clerks from the Old Minster, Winchester.²³ The Regularis Concordia stated how King Edgar ‘drove out the negligent clerks with their abominations’, and ‘rescued and defended from the savage open mouths of the wicked-as it were the gaping jaws of wolves-those sheep which by God’s grace he had diligently gathered together.’²⁴ Such sentiments were echoed in other sources composed by monastic writers. In the earliest biography of St Oswald, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York, written by Byrhtferth, attention was drawn to the widespread religious decay of Oswald’s youth.

In those days there were not monastic men, nor were there rulers of that holy institution in the region of the English, but religious and most worthy clerks who yet were accustomed to give the treasure which they had acquired with greedy hearts, not for the honour of the church, but for their wives.²⁵

²² David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England: a History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940-1216 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1963), p.24.

²³ BCS 1190 (S 745); E. John, ‘The church of Winchester and the tenth-century reformation’, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 47 (1964-5), pp.420-21.

²⁴ Regularis Concordia, p.2.

²⁵ Vita Oswaldi archiepiscopi Eboracensis, in The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops, ed. J. Raine, 3 vols. (RS, London, 1879-94), vol. 1, p.411. ‘In diebus illis non monastici viri, nec ipsius sanctae institutionis regulae erant

Wulfstan of Winchester and Aelfric of Eynsham, the early biographers of St Aethelwold, also wrote of cathedrals staffed by clergy who were given to riotous and scandalous behaviour. These wicked canons married and divorced wives and were prone to drunkenness.²⁶ Wulfstan of Winchester wrote.

Now at that time there were in the Old Minster, where the bishop's throne is situated, cathedral canons involved in wicked and scandalous behaviour, victims of pride, insolence, and riotous living to such a degree that some of them did not think fit to celebrate mass in due order. They married wives illicitly, divorced them, and took others; they were constantly given to gourmandizing and drunkenness. The holy man Aethelwold would not tolerate it. With permission from King Edgar he lost no time in expelling from the monastery such detestable blasphemers against God. He replaced them there with monks from Abingdon to whom he was thus both abbot and bishop.²⁷

The reformers expression of these views only occurred in writings of monastic origin and were notably absent from the Life of St Dunstan probably composed by a secular clerk.²⁸ Their remarks have obscured the clerical element within early Anglo-Saxon monasticism assuming that monks and secular clergy could be easily separated in the

in regione Anglorum, sed erant religiosi et dignissimi clerici qui tamen thesauros suos, quos avidis acquirebant cordibus, non ad ecclesiae honorem, sed suis dare solebant uxoribus.' For Byrthferth's authorship see M. Lapidge, 'The hermeneutic style in tenth-century Anglo-Latin literature', Anglo-Saxon England 4 (1975), pp.91-95.

²⁶ Aelfric, Vita S.Aethelwoldi 14, in Three Lives of English Saints, ed. M. Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972), pp.22-23.

²⁷ Wulfstan of Winchester, Vita S.Aethelwoldi, in Wulfstan of Winchester, The Life of St Aethelwold, ed. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), pp.30-31.

²⁸ M. Lapidge, 'B. and the Vita S. Dunstani', in St Dunstan. His Life, Times and Cult, pp.247-59. It is possible that Dunstan's own refusal to forcibly dismiss the secular clergy of the cathedral and replace them with monks which would have attracted greater royal patronage accounts for the limited development of his own cult see A.T. Thacker, 'Cults at Canterbury: Relics and Reform under Dunstan and his Successors', in *Ibid.*, pp.221-245.

early Anglo-Saxon Church.²⁹ They have also tended to focus concentration upon Bede's monastic views without recognising the manner in which such views were closely connected to Bede's conception that the early Anglo-Saxon Church was an episcopally organised institution and the conversion of the English people was largely the achievement of bishops.

Studies of Anglo-Saxon monasticism before the Benedictine reform have largely focussed upon the use within the sources of the terms *monasterium* or its Old English equivalent *minster*. Analysis has focussed upon the wide range of communal religious communities which were all described by this single term. This has led to the development of what David Rollason has characterised as the 'Minster hypothesis', a view which has triggered a large amount of historical debate and which sees no distinction between churches following a regular life committed to ascetic practices and secular churches not bound by a rule and committed to pastoral work.³⁰ According to the 'Minster hypothesis' all communal religious establishments were called *minsters*, the term did not merely apply to religious houses marked by Benedictinism and contemplative regularity.

This reassessment of monasticism has undermined the importance of the role of the episcopate within the early Anglo-Saxon Church because it has been argued

²⁹ Wormald, 'Aethelwold and his continental counterparts', pp.40-41.

³⁰ Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters 597-900'; Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950-1200, ed. J. Blair (Oxford, 1988); Id., 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', Domesday Book: A Reassessment, ed. P. Sawyer (London, 1985), pp.104-42; Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992). David Rollason has debated about the 'Minster hypothesis' in an as yet unpublished paper. I was kindly allowed to see a draft of this paper at an early stage.

that organised pastoral care existed from the earliest days of the Anglo-Saxon conversion and was not confined to the ordained clergy under the supervision of bishops but rather exercised by all the religious within networks of *monasteria* forming a clear system of ecclesiastical organisation.³¹ Bishops, it is argued, sought to gain control of monasteries by means of conciliar legislation precisely because monasteries exercised clearly defined pastoral functions. The question of the nature and organisation of pastoral care is a complex one and is not helped by the ambiguities evident within the terminology employed by the sources. Bede himself drew a terminological distinction between *monasteria* and *sedes episcopales*, using either the latter term or *ecclesiae* to describe episcopal sees.³² This clearly indicates that Bede considered that the episcopate fulfilled an important and clear role in the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Churchmen recognised that bishops occupied a specific place in the Church hierarchy and formed a distinct group identity. Before examining how this identity was defined by various texts produced by early Anglo-Saxon clerics it is necessary to clarify the nature of these texts and the problems associated with them. This forms the subject of the first chapter.

³¹ S. Foot, 'Parochial ministry in early Anglo-Saxon England: the role of monastic communities', in *Studies in Church History* 26 (Oxford, 1989), pp.43-54; C. Brooke, 'Rural Ecclesiastical Institutions in England: The Search for their Origins', *Settimane* 28 (1982), pp.685-711; G. Constable, 'Monasteries, rural churches and the *cura animarum* in the early Middle Ages', *Settimane* 28 (1982), pp.349-89; T.L. Amos, 'Monks and Pastoral Care in the Early Middle Ages' in *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. T.F.X. Noble and J.J. Contreni (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1988) pp.165-80; A.T. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, pp.137-70.

³² S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: a review of terminology', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, p.219.

CHAPTER ONE.

THE SOURCES. PROBLEMS, APPROACHES AND LIMITATIONS

I. Hagiography

A fundamental problem which faces the historian of the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate concerns the fact that in many cases bishops have left no writings providing a detailed portrait of themselves but rather exist through the words of another. Their lives were constructed and analysed by authors who did not belong to their ranks. As a result of their status as saints they were perceived through the pious lens of the hagiographer. Historiography often overlooks this assigning motives, aspirations and ambitions to bishops which may in reality have belonged to those whose writings created an image of their lives and concerns.¹ Early Anglo-Saxon bishops did not write hagiography. They were in part prepared to allow others to describe and formulate the nature of their activities, functions and roles. The idiosyncratic concerns and variety of voices of the authors of hagiography need to be properly considered and evaluated. For hagiography, what Levison termed 'the literary expression of the cult of the saints'², has been misread, misunderstood and misused. One study has noted that the term itself is almost perceived as an epithet

¹ This concept is well explored in a different context in relation to Eusebius' portrait of Origen, in P. Cox, Biography in Late Antiquity: The Quest for the Holy Man (Berkeley, 1983).

² W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian' in Bede, His Life, Times and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Century of his Death, ed. A Hamilton-Thompson (Oxford, 1935), p.123.

signifying a pious work of fiction or exercise in panegyric.³

Study of hagiographical texts in general is still to a certain extent haunted by the ghost of Gibbon who denounced such texts on account of their 'disregard for truth and probability.'⁴ As a result there is a fundamental conflict between the goals of many historians and the texts which they examine. They seek an objective reconstruction of the past from texts which are polemical and tendentious, clearly designed for purposes of edification and to present an example of Christian virtue rather than to narrate objective historical truth. The integrity of hagiographical texts is often destroyed by those whose preoccupations with the discovery of a residue of usable historical data within them cause the texts to be chopped, changed and fitted into anachronistic frameworks which do not relate to their original function and

³ T.J. Heffernan, Sacred Biography (Oxford, 1988), p.16. Heffernan offers an important assessment of the need to understand the genre on its own terms. His intention to highlight and criticise prejudices against hagiography espoused by positivist writers causes him to remove the term hagiography itself from his work and to replace it with the more neutral term of his title.

⁴ E. Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York, 1952), Vol. I, p.467. There is a vast amount of literature dealing with hagiography and the cult of saints as the huge annotated bibliography in S. Wilson, Saints and their Cults (Cambridge, 1983) shows. Amongst the studies see H. Delehaye, Les Légendes hagiographiques 3rd edn., Subsidia Hagiographica 21 (Brussels, 1934); R. Aigrain, L'hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire (Paris, 1953); J. Howe, 'Saints and society through the centuries', Catholic Historical Review 52 (1986), pp.425-36; J.-C. Schmitt, 'La Fabrique des saints', Annales, Economies, sociétés, civilisations 39 (1984), pp.286-300; M. Heinzelmann, 'Neue Aspekte der biographischen und hagiographischen Literatur in der lateinischen Welt (1-6 Jahrhundert)', Francia 1 (1973), pp.27-44; Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IVe-XIIe siècles, Etudes Augustiniennes (Paris, 1981); B. de Gaiffier, Recherches d'hagiographie latine, Subsidia Hagiographica 52 (Brussels, 1971). On Anglo-Saxon cults see D.W. Rollason, The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England (Leicester, 1982), esp. pp.3-8; Id., Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989); S. Ridyard, The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge, 1988); M. Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature, ed. M. Lapidge and M. Godden (Cambridge, 1991), pp.243-63.

intentions. A saint is thus often created in the historian's own image. Commenting upon early Merovingian hagiography, Paul Fouracre has noted the need to challenge existing historiography on saints cults. He has stated, 'whereas our early medieval texts are at present hardly capable of deconstruction, the historiography which has been built upon them is certainly ripe for it.'⁵ Hagiographers were therefore concerned not merely with the historical role of their subjects but with providing an interpretation of the nature of sanctity itself. It is forgotten that within any culture factual reality is processed through the system of ideologies in that culture and that what re-emerges after this process is a perceived reality which is no longer factual reality as such but a collectively held interpretation of it.

In contrast Gibbon's ghost must be destroyed and hagiography must be regarded as an important means of investigating the mental infrastructure of the period to which it belongs. One needs to penetrate the thought world of the texts seeking as closely as possible to find a language to understand their aims and concerns and thereby attempting to discover not necessarily what happened but how what happened is represented. As Susan Ridyard has written, 'for the history and interpretation of the cult of saints hagiography possesses a unique value which cannot be measured exclusively in terms of its objective reliability and which is not necessarily forfeited even when such reliability is shown to be wanting.'⁶

Recent work on hagiographical texts, helped by literary and anthropological

⁵ P. Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography', Past and Present 127 (1990), p.29.

⁶ Ridyard, Royal Saints, pp.12-13.

techniques, has been more sympathetic towards the attitudes and assumptions of their authors and has sought to fit texts into the thought world to which they belong.⁷ Such approaches are to be welcomed in so far as they recognise that texts need to be related to the context for which they were originally composed. However, they have often been concerned with hagiography as a means of focussing upon a mental world which was largely motivated by political considerations. This in part derives from the types of saints whose cults have been investigated. Ridyard's focus on the copiously documented royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth and eleventh centuries whilst emphasising the ubiquity and persistence of royal cults is ultimately more concerned with dynastic politics than with Anglo-Saxon religiosity.⁸ However, this concentration upon the political functions of the cult of saints has also arisen from the manner in which hagiographical texts are shown to have interacted with secular power structures. Functions of the cult of saints in Anglo-Saxon England which

⁷ The fundamental place to begin is with the work which Peter Brown has done for the saints of late antiquity most notably in his collected studies Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (Berkeley, 1982); The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity (Chicago, 1981) and 'The Saint as exemplar in late antiquity', in Saints and Virtues, ed. J.S. Hawley (Berkeley, 1987), pp.3-14; Rollason, Saints and Relics; Ridyard, Royal Saints; F. Graus, Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger (Prague, 1965); T. Head, Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans 800-1200 (Cambridge, 1990); B.de Gaiffier, 'Mentalité de l'hagiographie médiéval d'après quelques travaux récents', Analecta Bollandiana 86 (1968), pp.391-9; Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography'; J.-C. Poulin, L'idéal de sainteté dans l'Aquitaine carolingienne d'après les sources hagiographiques (750-950) (Laval, 1975). Literary criticism has been suggested as a means of penetrating the thought world of texts see J.-L. Derouet, 'Les possibilités d'interprétation sémiologique des textes hagiographiques', Revue d'histoire de l'église de France 62 (1976), pp.153-62; M. Van Uytenghe, 'Les avatars contemporains de l'hagiologie', Francia 5 (1977), pp.639-71.

⁸ Ridyard, Royal Saints; J.M.H. Smith, 'Early Medieval Hagiography in the Late Twentieth Century', Early Medieval Europe 1 (1992), pp.69-76 at p.74.

centre around the denigration of a rival royal family, the promotion of an ideal of kingship or the protection of land have been emphasised in a number of studies.⁹

In Kent royal saints were closely connected with royally-endowed monasteries. Eleventh-century texts refer to the cult of the murdered seventh-century Kentish princes, Aethelred and Aethelberht, in expiation for whose death the house at Minster-in-Thamet was founded by King Egbert of Kent and the Kentish princess, Domne Eafe, who acted as the first abbess of the house.¹⁰ Saints were also closely associated with royal monasteries in Mercia. St Mildburg was a daughter of Merewalh, king of the Magonsætan, and became the second abbess of the royal monastery of Wenlock.¹¹ St Guthlac of Crowland was said to have come from Mercian descent and retained close contact with the Mercian king, Aethelbald. Aethelbald was buried in the monastery at Repton where Guthlac had entered the religious life.¹²

⁹ Ridyard, Royal Saints, ch.8; D.W. Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', Anglo-Saxon England 11 (1983), pp.1-22; Id., The Search for Saint Wigstan, Vaughan Paper no.27 (Leicester, 1981); Id., Saints and Relics, esp. ch.5; Id., The Mildrith Legend; Id., 'Relics as an instrument of royal policy c.900-c.1050', Anglo-Saxon England 15 (1986), pp.91-103; A.T. Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia', Midland History 10 (1985), pp.1-25.

¹⁰ Rollason, The Mildrith Legend; Id., Saints and Relics, pp.115-17; Die Heiligen Englands, ed. F. Liebermann (Hanover, 1889), pp.1, 3, 13. There is evidence that a version of the death of these princes was in existence in the eighth century see Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints', p.5 and n.19.

¹¹ Die Heiligen Englands, ed. Liebermann, pp.3, 11. An eleventh-century Life of the abbess Milburga is preserved in London, British Library, Additional MS 34, 633, fols.206-216v see Rollason, The Mildrith Legend, pp.25-26; Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries', pp.4-5. Further discussion may be found in H.P.R. Finberg, The Early Charters of the West Midlands (Leicester, 1961).

¹² Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries', p.5.

The cults of murdered royal saints could fulfil specific political purposes. The enemies of the killers of such royal martyrs could regard the cults as a means of focussing opposition to them. The cult of St Wigstan was fostered at Repton, which was closely associated with the house of Wiglaf, a Mercian family competing for power after the death of King Ceolwulf in 825. Wigstan the grandson of Wiglaf, according to a Vita of the twelfth or thirteenth century, instead of succeeding to the throne had adopted a life of religion and refused to allow Beorhtfrith, the son of a rival royal family the house of Beorhtwulf, to marry his mother. His subsequent murder led to the promotion of his cult by Wiglaf's house in order to emphasise the unsuitability of allowing the house of Beorhtwulf royal power because it had been associated with crimes of regicide.¹³ The cult of the murdered Northumbrian prince, Ealhmund who was enshrined and venerated at Derby also served a similar function. Ealhmund's cult was promoted by the Mercians in order to rally opposition towards Northumbria. It was related to the war Eardwulf of Northumbria waged against Cenwulf of Mercia which had arisen out of the accusation that Cenwulf had sheltered enemies of the Northumbrian king.¹⁴ It is possible that the cults of murdered royal saints developed out of a general desire expressed by the Church to curb the killing of royal persons as expressed in a canon of the Council held under the papal legates

¹³ Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints', pp.5-9, 19-20; Id., The Search for St Wigstan; Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries', pp.12-16; Die Heiligen Englands, ed. Liebermann, p.11.

¹⁴ Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints', pp.3-5, 20; Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries', pp.15-16; Die Heiligen Englands, ed. Liebermann, pp.11-12.

in 786.¹⁵

David Rollason has stressed that the translation by Queen Osthryth, the wife of Aethelred of Mercia, of the relics of her uncle, the Bernician king St Oswald, to the monastery at Bardney in the kingdom of Lindsey possessed a political function. The monks of Bardney received the body with some reluctance because Oswald belonged to another kingdom and had formerly conquered them. This has been interpreted as a sign of the interest shared by the Mercian and Bernician royal dynasties in subordinating previously independent kingdoms.¹⁶ It is however possible that Osthryth's interest in this cult stemmed more from her sense of responsibility towards her own kindred than from any elaborate political motive. Political interpretations of the cult of saints have not been confined to those cults concerned with royal saints. The cult of an episcopal saint, St Wilfrid, has been shown to have been primarily concerned with Wilfrid's ability to defend his large family of monasteries from his enemies and detractors. Wilfrid's concern to appear to his disciples after his death and guard the monastery of Ripon by surrounding its walls with a great arc of light has been related to the saint's own involvement in the troubled succession to the Northumbrian throne in the early eighth century.¹⁷ The distinction between the nature of Wilfrid's episcopal sanctity and that of St Cuthbert has also been explained through the fact that Cuthbert's cult has been closely

¹⁵ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3, canon 12, pp.23-24; Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints', p.17.

¹⁶ *HE* III.11; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp.120-21.

¹⁷ *VW* 68; D.P. Kirby, 'Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid', in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, ed. D. P. Kirby (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1974), pp.1-34.

identified with kings and bishops who had acted in opposition to Wilfrid during his troubled and turbulent career.¹⁸ Rollason has therefore stated that 'the cults of Wilfrid and Cuthbert would have served as foci for opposing parties in a politico-ecclesiastical conflict.'¹⁹

The political functions of the cult of saints and the hagiographical texts which promoted and supported a particular cult are clearly of importance and should not be overlooked. However, these political approaches, which are not confined to Anglo-Saxon cults, have often tended to neglect the more self-consciously spiritual aspects of the texts.²⁰ Although in an age less dominated and saturated by religious culture and belief it may be unfashionable to consider the spiritual dimension of hagiography, it is fundamental to understand that the world of the Anglo-Saxons was not our own. For as readers of texts our understanding comes from, as far as possible, some form of acceptance of the author's evaluative point of view even if this means suspending our own judgments during the act of reading. It should therefore be noted that one of the primary functions of hagiographical writing is to

¹⁸ A.T. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in Saint Cuthbert. His Cult and His Community to AD 1200, ed. G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp.119-22; W. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History (Princeton, 1988), pp.235-328.

¹⁹ Rollason, Saints and Relics, p.113.

²⁰ For the continental perspective note J. Fontaine, 'Hagiographie et Politique de Sulpice Sévère à Venance Fortunat', Revue d'histoire de l'église de France 62 (1976), pp.113-40; J.-C. Poulin, 'Hagiographie et politique. La première vie de Saint Samson de Dol', Francia 5 (1977), pp.1-19; Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography'; K.J. Leyser, Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society (London, 1979), p.88; P. Corbet, Les Saints Ottoniens: sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté féminine autour de l'an mil Beihefte der Francia 15. (Sigmaringen, 1986); R. Folz, Les Saints rois du moyen âge en occident (VIe-XIIIe siècles), Subsidia Hagiographica 68 (Brussels, 1984).

view human behaviour as an inseparable part of an ethical and theological matrix and to record the consistent inbreaking of the divine into the world.

Few historians have attempted to investigate the theological dimensions of hagiography and the cult of saints. The historian of hagiography has much to learn from biblical and theological studies. A theological approach to the nature and meaning of history has revealed that one can define two fundamental kinds of historical approach, internal and external.²¹ The historian concerned with external history attempts to write as a detached observer. Internal history, however, is written from the viewpoint of the active participant. Early Christian historians were concerned with the composition of history in this latter manner. They were concerned with the historicity of Christ's life but their concern possessed underlying theological convictions. They sought to celebrate the Christ of faith and not merely to convey information about Christ as a historical person.²² This approach to history is similarly true of the hagiographer. Hagiography subordinates historical fact to questions concerning meaning and significance. The saint exists as a sign pointing to the reality of God and a means of making the supernatural concrete.

Investigation of hagiography involves not merely an examination of the Lives which were composed concerning the saints but also an examination of the authors and communities which remembered and evaluated those saints. In some cases saints

²¹ H.R. Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York, 1967), pp.42-54.

²² L.T. Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Philadelphia, 1986), pp.11-29; S.D. Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge (New Haven, 1989); E. Käsemann, 'Is the Gospel Objective?', in Essays On New Testament Themes, trans. W.J. Montague (London, 1964), pp.48-62.

could become involved in a process of metamorphosis as their cults were re-interpreted in different times and contexts. Stylistic revisions evident in the complex textual histories of certain cults could create an image of sanctity modified to suit the preoccupations of a later age.²³ This further underlines the fact that it is necessary to consider hagiography in terms of how it reveals the thought world of the community to which it belonged. A saint's Life is a sacred text designed to narrate central spiritual truths, designed to show the inter-relationship between heavenly and earthly values and designed to show how the saint was able to create the kingdom of heaven on earth. A Life belonged to a collective series of Lives as Gregory of Tours recognised and the sanctity of the hero is interpreted through the extent to which he has put on Christ and is one with Him.²⁴

Hagiographers were therefore concerned to present the protagonists within their writings as archetypes of sanctity sharing the powers and virtues of earlier saints and biblical heroes. They thus produced works which were literary mosaics

²³ This happened for example to Saint Martin as is described in R. Van Dam, 'Images of Saint Martin in Late Roman and Early Merovingian Gaul', Viator 19 (1988), pp.1-27. It is also evident in the various recensions of the life of the fifth-century virgin saint of Paris, Genovefa, as described in M. Heinzelmänn and J.-C. Poulin, Les vies anciennes de Geneviève de Paris: études critiques (Paris, 1986); Rollason, Saints and Relics, ch.8 notes a similar process with regard to the cult of Saint Cuthbert.

²⁴ Gregory of Tours, Liber Vitae Patrum, praef. MGH SRM 1.2, p.312. Trans. E. James, Gregory of Tours: The Life of the Fathers (Liverpool, 1985), p.28. Note also the comment from a surviving early Anglo-Saxon hagiographical text, The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Kansas, 1968), ch.30, p.131, 'So let no one be disturbed even if these miracles were performed by any other of the saints, since the holy Apostle, through the mystery of the limbs of a single body, which he compares to the living experience of the saints, concludes that we are all "members one of another."'

dominated by commonplaces and conventionalised schema.²⁵ A saint was united to fellow saints and the acts of heroism produced by the saint were not shown to be genuinely autonomous but were rather the result of the workings of divine providence. This raises an important point with regard to the concept of sanctity and ideal of sainthood explored within hagiographical writings. Despite Gregory of Tours' comment, it seems clear that hagiographers, although marked by a shared series of assumptions about what constituted sainthood, could still nevertheless find scope to explore sanctity in different ways. The concept of sanctity varied from place to place.²⁶ Although a saint was ultimately related to the image of Christ, hagiographers could differ over the manner in which the saint existed as a type of Christ. Some therefore chose to convey the thaumaturgical powers of the saint representing the saint as a wonder-worker and ascetic whilst others emphasised the saint's status as an individual who suffered persecution. The concept of sanctity was thus related to the concerns of the hagiographer and his audience. Texts showed the workings of God's providence within their own time and place. The placing of the life of a saint within a larger world amongst a community of saints by means of an elaborate system of textual borrowing did not destroy the individuality of the saint. Texts explored individuality through plurality and unity through diversity.

²⁵ B. de Gaiffier, 'Miracles bibliques et vies de saints', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 88 (1966), pp.376-85; Id., 'Mentalité de l'hagiographie médiévale d'après quelques travaux récents'; M. Van Uytvanghe, 'Modèles bibliques dans l'hagiographie', in *Le Moyen Age et la Bible*, ed. P. Riché and G. Lobrichon (Paris, 1984), pp.449-487; Id., 'La Bible dans les vies de saints mérovingiennes', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 62 (1976), pp.103-11; J. Fontaine, 'Bible et hagiographie dans la royauté franc mérovingien (600-750)', *Analecta Bollandiana* 97 (1979), pp.387-96.

²⁶ Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend*, pp.6-7; Smith, 'Early Medieval Hagiography'.

The cult of saints in early Anglo-Saxon England was almost exclusively monastic and the hagiographical texts which advertised and promoted particular shrines were primarily a monastic form of literature.²⁷ They were composed by monks²⁸ and sought to impose monastic ideals upon their public by inspiring devotion, harnessing pious beliefs and promoting forms of religious practice. As the Rule of Saint Benedict intended they provided private, devotional reading material for monastic communities.²⁹ They also served a public purpose by furnishing material for Latin readings in the liturgy and for sermons preached at the saint's shrine.³⁰ Hagiographical texts sought to intensify devotion to the saint whose life they narrated by providing a history of the cult and its relics. Their authors forged a link between the holy dead and a living audience. As a result of the monastic background of early Anglo-Saxon hagiography, bishops in the early Anglo-Saxon

²⁷ A.T. Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background to Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiography', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), ch.1; C.W. Jones, Saints' Lives and Chronicles (Ithaca, New York, 1947), p.52.

²⁸ The exception to this is provided by Alcuin's Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae since Alcuin was a deacon and never a monk. Although strictly speaking this text is not a hagiographical work, it has been related to the hagiographical genre by Donald Bullough on the grounds that it fundamentally deals with *sancti*. D.A. Bullough, 'Hagiography as Patriotism: Alcuin's "York Poem" and the Early Northumbrian "Vitae Sanctorum"', in Hagiographie, Cultures, et Sociétés, Centre de recherche sur l'antiquité tardive et le haut moyen âge, Université de Paris. Etudes Augustiniennes (Paris, 1981), pp.339-59, at p.351.

²⁹ Regula Sancti Benedicti 9, 42, 48, ed. A. De Vogüé and J. Neufville, SC 182, (Paris, 1971-2), pp.510-12, 584, 598-604; Cassiodorus, Institutiones I.17, 32, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1937), pp.51-7, 80.

³⁰ A tenth-century manuscript of Bede's Prose Life of St Cuthbert London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A XIX divided the Vitae up by figures into twelve approximately equal parts presumably for reading aloud see B. Colgrave, 'The Earliest Saints Lives' Written in England', Proceedings of the British Academy 44 (1958), pp.35-60 at p.49.

Church were therefore partially viewed from a monastic perspective.

Episcopal loyalties to monastic connections in Anglo-Saxon England are evident through the fact that bishops were frequently not buried in cathedral churches. The early archbishops of Canterbury were buried with the kings of Kent in the monastery of St Peter and St Paul. John of Beverley although bishop of York was buried at Beverley and Wilfrid was buried at Ripon.³¹ Although monastically enshrined bishops were known on the continent their predominance in England indicates differences between English and continental ecclesiastical structures.³² Furthermore episcopal sees could be sited within *monasteria* as at Lindisfarne where the bishop exercised unfettered control over his diocese but was subject to the abbot within the community.³³ Both Aidan and Cuthbert were buried there.³⁴ Like their predecessors in Late Antique Gaul, early Anglo-Saxon hagiographers sought to harness the ascetic traditions of monasticism to the needs of the Church as a whole and by so doing offer a definition of the nature of episcopal power which was heavily imbued with monastic ideals.³⁵

³¹ HE II.3; III.23; V.6; VW 66.

³² Vita Amandi I.26, MGH SRM 5, p.449; Vita Desiderii 31, 38, MGH SRM 4, pp.588-89, 593; Passio Leudegarii II 29-30, MGH SRM 5, pp.352-54; H. Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England 3rd edn. (London, 1990), pp.130-39.

³³ VCP 16.

³⁴ HE III.17; VCA IV.13-14; VCP 37, 40, 42.

³⁵ This pattern is examined within Late Antiquity by R.A. Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity (Cambridge, 1990), chs.12-13 and by P. Rousseau, Ascetics Authority and the Church In the Age of Jerome and Cassian (Oxford, 1978); Id., 'The Spiritual Authority of the "Monk-Bishop": Eastern Elements in Some Western Hagiography of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', Journal of Theological Studies 22 (1971), pp.380-419.

One central problem presented by the hagiographical evidence is that compared with the large quantity of surviving continental Vitae there are few surviving early Anglo-Saxon hagiographical texts and even fewer that deal specifically with saints who were bishops.³⁶ An investigation of early Anglo-Saxon episcopal hagiography is thus primarily an investigation of Northumbrian monastic culture and presents a Northumbrian view of the episcopate. The texts with which this study is primarily concerned are the Lives of Saint Cuthbert, Eddius Stephanus' Life of Wilfrid and Alcuin's Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis. Although an Old English Life of Saint Chad survives in the form of a homily from eighth-century Mercia, this has been omitted from the study as it is wholly dependent upon Bede's account of the saint and adds nothing tangible to that account.³⁷ There are no surviving episcopal Vitae from southern England. This geographical bias is unavoidable. It is found again within the evidence provided by the surviving decrees of church councils, although here it is Northumbria which is under-represented.

³⁶ Of the corpus of early Anglo-Saxon hagiography, the text which is arguably the oldest English hagiographical text is the Anonymous of Whitby, Vita S. Gregorii Magni, ed. B. Colgrave, The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great (Kansas, 1968) which deals with Pope Gregory the Great and the relics of King Edwin of Northumbria. The anonymous Vita Ceolfridi, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol.1, pp.388-404 deals with the life of the Northumbrian abbot, Ceolfrid. Bede's Historia Abbatum, Ibid., pp.364-387 deals with various abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow including Ceolfrid. The Vita S Guthlaci, ed. B. Colgrave, Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac (Cambridge, 1956) concerns itself with the ascetic anchorite Guthlac who probably once belonged to a community of clerks since when he entered the *monasterium* at Repton, before beginning his solitary life at Crowland he is described 'accepto clericali habitu.', ch.20, p.84.

³⁷ R. Vleeskruyer, The Life of Saint Chad: an Old English Homily (Amsterdam, 1953).

II. Bede

Through his composition of prose and verse Lives of Saint Cuthbert, Bede was a key author of early Anglo-Saxon hagiography. However, his works covering the episcopate extend beyond the hagiographical. The Historia Ecclesiastica whilst possessing hagiographical elements is far wider in its scope than a hagiographical text.³⁸ It is a self-consciously didactic work marked by deliberate standardisation and concerned to emphasise the unity of the English Church. Bede's prime concern was with the unity and cohesion of the *gens Anglorum* united by a common commitment to the values of Latin Christianity.³⁹ He was concerned with edification, with presenting a 'gallery of good examples.'⁴⁰ The fact that his work is standardised means that it reveals ideals rather than realities. Despite this element of standardisation the bishops within its presentation of exemplary figures are

³⁸ The distinction between the genres of hagiography and history is a point of some debate. It may be usefully approached through P.A. Sigal, 'Histoire et hagiographie: Les Miracula aux XIe et XIIe siècles', Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'ouest 87 (1980), pp.237-57; B.de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie et historiographie. Quelques aspects du problème', Settimane 17 (1970), pp.139-66.

³⁹ The literature on this subject is vast. See for example the essays on Bede, 'Bede I' and 'Bede II' in J. Campbell, Essays in Anglo-Saxon History (London, 1986), pp.1-48; P. Hunter Blair, The World of Bede 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1990); Id., Bede's Ecclesiastical History Of The English Nation And Its Importance Today (Jarrow Lecture, 1959); G. Tugène, 'L'histoire "ecclésiastique" du peuple anglais: réflexions sur le particularisme et l'universalisme chez Bède', Recherches Augustiniennes 17 (1982), pp.129-72; W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian'; H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'Bede and the "English People"', Journal of Religious History 11 (1981), pp.501-23; J.N. Stephens, 'Bede's Ecclesiastical History', History 62 (1977), pp.1-14; C.W. Jones, 'Bede as Early Medieval Historian', Medievalia et Humanistica 4 (1946), pp.26-36; J. Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', Studia Medievalia 3rd ser. 23 (1982), pp.647-95; R. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York and London, 1966); R.A. Markus, Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography (Jarrow Lecture, 1975).

⁴⁰ Campbell, 'Bede I', p.25.

nevertheless perceived and presented in different ways. They are by no means all Anglo-Saxons. Some of Bede's greatest heroes were of Irish or Gallic origin and reveal the continental dimension within the early Anglo-Saxon Church which is further evident in the texts which influenced the composition of hagiography. The early Anglo-Saxon Church was marked by links between the monastic *paruchia* of England, Ireland and Gaul. English authors would not necessarily have thought in terms of tension between insular and continental motifs.⁴¹ Their works transcended particularism possessing both local and universal significance.

Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica addresses some of the central concerns of this study. It is, however, limited. It is limited in two ways. Firstly, it is limited by Bede's own interests and concerns, manifest for example in its lack of information concerning British bishops due to Bede's own hostility towards them because of their self-conscious decision to endorse ecclesiastical customs which were not Roman. It is further limited by the source material to which Bede had access. Bede was not a contemporary witness of many of the events which he described. He was dependent upon a number of informants with whom he communicated both orally and in writing. He also drew upon a number of different documents. As a result the Historia Ecclesiastica deals considerably with Northumbria and with information supplied from Canterbury but Bede lacked a Mercian informant. Thus like hagiographical

⁴¹ Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background', p.336; J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in England', Ampleforth Journal 76 (1971), pp.12-29. Repr. in Essays in Anglo-Saxon History, pp.47-67.

material it is marked by geographical bias and limitations.⁴²

Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica cannot be viewed in isolation. It must be placed within the context of what Bede himself considered to be his singularly most important literary achievement, the composition of his biblical commentaries. Biblical exegesis lay at the forefront of Bede's world. At the close of the Historia Ecclesiastica he wrote, 'I have spent all my life in this monastery, applying myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures.'⁴³ The relationship between the Historia Ecclesiastica and the biblical commentaries is now fully recognised by historians.⁴⁴ The commentaries are not primarily designed, like a hagiographical account, to present a complete picture of the nature and functions of episcopal office. Their principal aim is to elucidate and comment upon scripture. However, in the thoroughly Biblical world in which Bede operated, institutions and groups within it sought to find a basis for their roles and activities within the scriptures and hence the commentaries illuminate and complement Bede's more focussed thinking about the nature of episcopal power and office. One source of this more focussed thinking is

⁴² D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the Historia Ecclesiastica', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 48 (1966), pp.341-71. For one example of Bede's geographical limitations see the analysis of Bede's limitations with regard to the West Midlands and the use of an alternative perspective on this area through topographical evidence in S. Bassett, 'Church and diocese in the West Midlands: the transition from British to Anglo-Saxon control', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, pp.13-40.

⁴³ HE V.24.

⁴⁴ J. McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', in Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp.76-98; B. Ward, The Venerable Bede (London, 1990), ch.3; R. Ray, 'What Do We Know About Bede's Commentaries?', Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 49 (1982), pp.5-20; Id., 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.125-140.

supplied by Bede's admonitory letter composed towards the end of his life to Bishop Egbert of York on the eve of York's acquisition of metropolitan status. This important and highly polemical work has been heavily studied in relation to early Anglo-Saxon monasticism because of its discussion of fraudulent, secularised religious houses which were perceived to have brought decay and disruption to both ecclesiastical and secular life. Recently its monastic concerns have been linked with earlier polemical monastic literature and shown to be less real than was once believed.⁴⁵ Its proposals and solutions based upon the importance of bishoprics, have, however been less studied. It will thus be argued that the text serves as a further indication of Bede's episcopal concerns and that it advocates an ideal of reform clearly based upon the episcopate and its functions.

III. Church Councils and other Legislative Material

A further source of material through which ideal images of the episcopate were generated is provided through the evidence of church councils and ecclesiastical legislation. It is within such prescriptive legislation that the episcopate spoke with its own voice and bishops themselves generated and controlled the picture which they presented of the nature and function of their role within a newly converted society. They provided ideas concerning the manner in which the Anglo-Saxon Church should be regulated and governed. Thus church councils enable one to examine the episcopate from the inside and to balance and contrast the self-image of the

⁴⁵ P. Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature in Western England (Cambridge, 1990), pp.126-131.

episcopate with the largely monastic view of episcopal authority found within hagiographical literature and the writings of Bede. A collective episcopal consciousness can be highlighted and investigated. Furthermore, church legislation embodied within texts such as Theodore's Penitential and Egbert's Dialogues enables ideas concerning the nature of the episcopate, the Church and Anglo-Saxon society to be related to particular figures within the episcopal hierarchy.⁴⁶ Attempts to Christianise early Anglo-Saxon society by actively inculcating Christian rituals and practices for both the laity and the clergy to follow can thus be related to the personal involvement of a number of bishops. Similarly attempts in prescriptive legislation to depaganise early Anglo-Saxon society by obliterating pagan rituals and beliefs which were perceived to have existed alongside or instead of Christian values reveal episcopal concern to ensure that communities fully operated in accordance with Christian doctrines and granted bishops a visible legitimacy, expressing the ideal hierarchical relationship between bishops and their congregations.

Until recently early Anglo-Saxon church councils were largely neglected by historians.⁴⁷ There are difficulties in defining the nature and character of such

⁴⁶ These texts have been examined by A.J. Frantzen, The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983); Id., 'The Tradition of Penitentials in Anglo-Saxon England', Anglo-Saxon England 11 (1983), pp.23-56.

⁴⁷ There is a small amount of comment in M. Deanesly, The Pre-Conquest Church in England (London, 1961) and J. Godfrey, The Anglo-Saxon Church (Cambridge, 1962). Simon Keynes provides a list of Anglo-Saxon Church Councils in Handbook of British Chronology, ed. E.B. Fryde 3rd edn. (London, 1986), pp.583-9. There is some discussion, particularly of the Council of Chelsea of 816 in N.P Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester, 1984), ch.9. The fullest studies are H. Vollrath, Die Synoden Englands Bis 1066 (Paderborn, 1985) and C. Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-c.850', (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990). This thesis is shortly to be published by Leicester University Press.

assemblies and the evidence for them is uneven. Evidence for the existence of a conciliar tradition in the early Anglo-Saxon Church often amounts to isolated and scattered references in Bede, hagiographical sources or sets of annals such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the set of Northern annals commonly known as the York Annals embedded within the Historia Regum of Symeon of Durham. During the eighth century the evidence for conciliar activity provided by charters becomes increasingly important. The charter evidence recounting the existence of councils presents a geographically uneven picture of extensive Southumbrian synodal activity because no Northumbrian charters survive in their entirety from the early Anglo-Saxon period.⁴⁸

Several early Anglo-Saxon church councils provide the most useful evidence for an investigation of the episcopate and its traditions and concerns. This is because they have left formal accounts of the canons which were promulgated at them and hence allow their business to be investigated. Thus this study will largely concentrate upon conciliar material provided by the Council of Hertford of 672 or 673⁴⁹, the Council of Hatfield of 679⁵⁰, the Council of Clofesho of 747⁵¹, the Legatine

⁴⁸ C. Hart, The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands (Leicester, 1975), esp. pp. 131-8. For concise introductions to the vast amount of literature on charters in general see P. Wormald, Bede and the Conversion of England, The Charter Evidence (Jarrow Lecture, 1984); N.P. Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Charters: the work of the last twenty years', Anglo-Saxon England 3 (1974), pp. 211-32.

⁴⁹ HE IV.5.

⁵⁰ HE IV.17.

⁵¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III, pp. 360-376.

Councils of 786⁵², the Council of Clofesho of 803⁵³ and the Council of Chelsea of 816.⁵⁴ These councils show how the episcopate was concerned with defining and describing its own self-image. This was particularly the case with regard to the self-image of the archbishop of Canterbury. The councils also reveal close links with continental legislation and show the episcopate actively engaged in extending and consolidating its power in the eighth century particularly through its involvement in disputes involving ecclesiastical property. They also reveal the pastoral concern of the episcopate and episcopal views concerning the nature and character of monasticism. Along with Theodore's Penitential and Egbert's Dialogues they possessed both a practical and an ideological significance. They spoke to the secular and ecclesiastical powers about the authority and position of the episcopate and its power to control the life of the Church. Their canons often drew upon and reiterated the decrees of earlier synods proclaimed by the Church as a whole. Thus the council of Hatfield acknowledged several universal councils: the council of Nicaea held in 325, the council of Constantinople of 381, the council of Ephesus of 431, the council of Chalcedon of 451, the council of Constantinople of 533 and the first Lateran Council of 649.⁵⁵ This practice means that it is difficult to assess the existence of particular abuses which early Anglo-Saxon bishops sought to eradicate or particular

⁵² Legatine Synods 786 HS III, pp.447-462. A more reliable edition is found in Dümmler, no.3, pp.19-29.

⁵³ Council of Clofesho 803 HS III, pp.541-547.

⁵⁴ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III, pp.579-586.

⁵⁵ HE IV.17, notes 1-2; Vollrath, Die Synoden, pp.92-95.

values which they sought to inculcate since the legislation which was promulgated at councils may merely be that of an earlier synod. However, this practice in itself shows how bishops in early Anglo-Saxon society were concerned to define their place in the Church in relation to the wider, universal Church of which they were a part and hence draw the Germanic world closer to the values and practices of Rome.

IV. General Structure of the Study

The study is divided into two parts. Each of the two parts attempts to show how the images of the episcopal authority created by various authors were closely related to the nature and function of the texts within which they were presented. The character of the presentation of bishops within a text was always influenced by the background, status and milieu of the author or authors. This is a fact which has often been overlooked or ignored. Writers were not disinterested observers of contemporary or near contemporary happenings. Their observations were shaped by their own personal experience and the communities to which they belonged. The first part of the study is a consideration of images of the episcopate created by non-episcopal writers. The following two chapters are concerned with Bede's ideas about the nature and function of the episcopate and the extent to which he saw the early English Church as an episcopal church. Chapter two discusses the manner in which Bede saw the episcopate to be at the centre of the conversion history of the *gens Anglorum*. It discusses his analysis of the establishment and consolidation of bishoprics and the functions which bishops were expected to perform. In chapter three the focus is upon the manner in which Bede discussed the individual personal

authority of bishops. It shows that Bede functioned as a monastic writer who was concerned to describe how bishops had assimilated a Western ascetic tradition and were expected to behave and act as monks. The adoption of the ascetic life by bishops was seen to be central to their episcopal sanctity. Bede attempted to convey how the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate came to terms with a number of varying ascetic traditions. The monastic culture which Bede inherited led him to view the episcopate in the context of an ecclesiological view which stressed how the human spirit may be united with God. The chapter on Stephanus' Life of Wilfrid which follows emphasises the manner in which the text located Wilfrid's episcopal sanctity in his ability to suffer and overcome persecution and to act as a lawgiver. A study of Alcuin's Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae and its portrayal of episcopal sanctity forms the subject of chapter five. This shows how Alcuin utilised episcopal figures to proclaim and develop the civic unity of York as a metropolitan see. By describing the acts of episcopal piety and benefaction performed by the bishops of York, Alcuin sought to mould and guide public opinion in support of the episcopal hierarchy providing an image of the ideal bishop as the first citizen of an urban community. The final part and final chapter focusses upon the self-image of the episcopate found within conciliar and legislative material. Throughout the study there will be a concern to emphasise continental parallels and influences which determined the way in which texts interpreted and conveyed ideas about episcopal authority in early Anglo-Saxon England.

Having established some of the problems and concerns which arise from the nature of the texts that defined and debated the concept of episcopal authority in early

Anglo-Saxon England, it is now necessary to turn to our first author, Bede, the father of English history. He forms the subject of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER TWO.

BEDE AND THE EPISCOPAL STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH

Bede rapidly acquired fame. In the mid eighth century Boniface wrote to Abbot Hwaetberht of Wearmouth and Jarrow requesting copies of treatises written by Bede 'that most skilled investigator of the Scriptures.'¹ He also sent Archbishop Egbert of York a copy of the letters of Gregory the Great and requested treatises by Bede in return. In a further letter to Egbert he requested copies of Bede's homilies and commentaries on the Proverbs of Solomon.² In a letter written to the community of Wearmouth and Jarrow at the close of the eighth century, Alcuin stressed the devotion which Bede had shown to the monastic office.³ By the late eighth century when Alcuin wrote his York Poem, Bede's relics at Jarrow were reputed to work miracles.⁴ When William of Malmesbury wrote his *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* in the twelfth century he included a lengthy encomium of Bede describing him in the following terms.

He is a man easier to admire than adequately to praise...there was no Englishman to rival his learning or imitate his virtues.⁵

¹ Tangl. no. 76, pp.158-9.

² Ibid., nos. 75, 91, pp.156-8, 206-8.

³ Dümmler, no.284, p.443.

⁴ BKSY 1315-18.

⁵ *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachis De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols. (RS London, 1887-9), vol. I, pp.59, 66-7, 'vir quem mirari facilius quam dignare praedicare possis...adeo nullus Anglorum studiorum eius aemulus, nullus gloriarum eius sequax fuit.' For Bede's posthumous reputation in general see A. Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as an Historian in Medieval England', *Journal of*

William of Malmesbury's comment is a very fitting one for it is indeed easier to admire Bede than to adequately evaluate the effects and influence of his character and writings. He belongs rightfully at the centre of any analysis of the early Anglo-Saxon Church but his limitations as a writer need to be exposed. It has been shown elsewhere that the fact that Bede was surrounded by an aura of eulogistic praise presents problems in itself since his influence has permeated subsequent analysis of the early Anglo-Saxon Church to such an extent that the Church has been almost entirely perceived through his writings.

Bede wrote selectively and with particular motives in mind. In Bede's writings the diversity evident within the early Anglo-Saxon Church is largely hidden because of the fact that he was concerned to insist on the inherent unity of the English Church and how that unity lay in devotion to Roman orthodoxy.⁶ The *Historia Ecclesiastica* was intended as an account of 'the history of the Church of Britain' and the *gens Anglorum*.⁷ The work says comparatively little about the ordinary layman and concentrates more specifically upon episcopal succession and the conversion of kings.

Ecclesiastical History 32 (1981), pp.397-425; D. Whitelock, *After Bede*, (Jarrow Lecture, 1960); M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A Hand-List of Bede Manuscripts* (New York, 1943); R.H.C. Davis, 'Bede after Bede', in *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. C. Harper-Bill, C.J. Holdsworth and J.L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1989), pp.103-16.

⁶ J. Campbell, 'Bede', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp.1-27; H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'Bede and the "English People"', *Journal of Religious History* 11 (1981), pp.501-23. Gregory the Great, one of Bede's great mentors, may be considered slightly more lenient, P. Meyvaert, 'Diversity within Unity: A Gregorian Theme', *Heythrop Journal* 4 (1963), pp.141-62.

⁷ *HE* V.24.

Bede viewed the *gens Anglorum* as God's instrument to correct the errors of the people of Britain so that the sinful Britons might share in the catholic peace of the Church Universal.⁸ The *gens Anglorum* were therefore praised for their attachment to Latin Christianity and their ability to avoid Celtic particularism.⁹ Bede's portrait of Aidan as an exemplary episcopal figure is noticeable for its comments concerning Aidan's persistent attachment to the Celtic mode of calculating Easter.

I have written these things about the character and work of Aidan, not by any means commending or praising his lack of knowledge in the manner of the observance of Easter; indeed I heartily detest it, as I have clearly shown in the book which I wrote called *De Temporibus*, but as a truthful historian, I have described in a straightforward manner those things which were done by him, praising such of his qualities as are worthy of praise and preserving their memory for the benefit of my readers.¹⁰

The *Historia Ecclesiastica* therefore sought to record the triumph of Roman orthodoxy in Britain exemplified in the acceptance of both the Roman dating for Easter and the Petrine tonsure by the Picts and Irish. In the 690s Adomnán, abbot of Iona, had accepted the Roman Easter while in Northumbria and in 716-7 Ceolfrid, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, had written to King Nechtan of the Picts concerning the true Easter and the shape of the tonsure.¹¹ This led to the acceptance of the Roman Easter on Iona in 716 under the guidance of the Northumbrian, Ecgbert, and

⁸ *HE* I.14, 22.

⁹ Cowdrey, 'Bede and the "English People"', *passim*.

¹⁰ *HE* III.17.

¹¹ *HE* V.15, 21; J-M. Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the Writing of History', *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp.66-70; M. Herbert, *Iona Kells and Derry* (Oxford, 1988), pp.48-9; D. P. Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', *Innes Review* 24 (1973), pp.6-25. On the tonsure as a symbol of orthodoxy see E. James, 'Bede and the Tonsure Question', *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp.85-98 at p.97.

the expulsion of non-conforming Columban clergy from Pictland in 717.¹² By the time Bede completed the Historia only the Britons still persisted in error.¹³ His concern to locate the unity of the church in its attachment to Roman orthodoxy is evident not merely through the discussion of the Paschal question and other areas of doctrine and discipline which divided the Roman and Celtic Churches in the Historia Ecclesiastica but also through the vigorous attacks upon heresy evident within his exegetical works.¹⁴

Commenting upon the Historia Ecclesiastica, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill wrote: 'One is always aware of Bede's Church as an institution of men and women, meetings and buildings, and especially as a bishops' Church.'¹⁵ This comment directs attention to a fundamental aspect of Bede's world which requires further examination. Since early childhood until his death Bede was and remained a monk. He had entered the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow at the age of seven and was to remain in it all his life. Although he was ordained to the priesthood by John of

¹² HE V.22; A.A.M. Duncan, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', in The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to R.W. Southern, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), pp.26-7, 35-6; Herbert, Iona, Kells and Derry, pp.48-52, 57-60; A.P. Smyth, Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland A.D. 80-1000 2nd edn. (Edinburgh, 1989), pp.138-9.

¹³ HE V.22; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Bede, the Irish and the Britons', Celtica 15 (1983), pp.42-52.

¹⁴ G. Bonner, 'Bede and Medieval Civilisation', Anglo-Saxon England 2 (1972), pp.73-4. Bede composed his commentary on the Song of Songs largely to attack the heretical teaching of Julian of Eclanum, in Cantica Canticorum Allegorica Expositio, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B, pp.167-375.

¹⁵ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede and Plummer', in Id., Historical Commentary, p.xxviii.

Beverley he never advanced to episcopal office.¹⁶ Patrick Wormald has observed that 'Bede was the first major historian to write as a monk.'¹⁷ Although he was nurtured in a world of reflective scholarship at Wearmouth and Jarrow it is now less common for historians to view Bede as, 'a lonely intellectual locked in an elite minority community'¹⁸ and a scholar who lived out his life away from the events of the outside world. However, he perceived that world and the clergy who occupied it through monastic eyes. Mayr-Harting has written, 'so often he speaks of the church or of society more generally, when basically the model of which he is thinking is that of a monastery.'¹⁹ Since Bede is, and indeed should be, seen as a representative and guardian of a monastic culture heavily influenced by Benedictine spirituality²⁰ his views concerning the episcopate have not been analysed to the same extent as his

¹⁶ HE V.24: 'Baeda famulus Christi et presbyter monasterii beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli, quod est ad Uiuraemuda et Ingyruum.' Bede commented upon his elevation to the priesthood in Opera Homiletica, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, p.84: 'quotquot per gradum sacerdotalem ad dispensanda illius sacramenta promoti.' Alcuin suggests that Bede entered the monastic life as an oblate, having been made to enter it by the 'loving concern' of his parents, BKSY 1294-5.

¹⁷ P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in Bede and Anglo-Saxon England, ed. R. T. Farrell (British Archaeological Reports 46; Oxford, 1978), pp.32-95, at p.63.

¹⁸ E. John review of W. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History (Princeton, 1988), in Catholic Historical Review 75 (1989), p.130; cf. A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), p.130.

¹⁹ H. Mayr-Harting, The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St. Benedict and Social Class, (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), p.14.

²⁰ A.G.P. Van Der Walt, 'Reflections of the Benedictine Rule in Bede's Homiliary', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 37 (1986), pp.367-76. G. Bonner, 'The Christian life in the thought of the Venerable Bede', Durham University Journal 63 n.s. 32 (1970), pp.39-55.

views concerning monasticism. This is somewhat surprising since Bede himself perceived a clear link between the episcopate and monastic life and was deeply concerned with the early Anglo-Saxon Church as an episcopally governed institution. Bede's writings brought bishops to life. In the Historia Ecclesiastica he dwelt at length on the qualities of exemplary monk-bishops such as Aidan and Cuthbert, describing their humility, devotion and attention to pastoral duties in the hope that his contemporaries would imitate their virtues.²¹ In writing of such figures Bede hung his own identity upon his heroes. The lives of the bishops he chose to record may not precisely reflect their own image of themselves.

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people which the Historia Ecclesiastica so vividly narrates was marked by the development and consolidation of bishoprics that served the ecclesiastical needs of newly converted kings and their subjects.²² For all his concern for the episcopate as an institution, however, Bede never lost sight of the fact that it was a collection of individuals. The motivating principle underlying Bede's activities 'was neither learning nor common sense but idealism. It was idealism which dictated his conception of the past, just as it coloured his

²¹ J. Campbell, 'Bede II', in Id., Essays in Anglo-Saxon History, pp.37-9; C.B. Kendall, 'Imitation and the Venerable Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica', in Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones, ed. M.H. King and W.M. Stevens 2 vols. (Collegeville, Minn., 1979), vol. 1, pp.169-71.

²² W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian', in Bede, His Life, Times and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Century of his Death, ed. A. Hamilton-Thompson (Oxford, 1935), p.143.

opinion of the present.’²³ This idealism led him to create textual images of the episcopate which were a means by which he was able to analyse the transformation and Christianisation of the society to which he belonged. He examined the early Anglo-Saxon Church as an episcopally governed Church both externally, from an institutional perspective, and internally by applying monastic and ascetic ideals to the careers of individual bishops. It is the purpose of both this and the following chapter to describe the form that his examination took.

Bede, Bishops and the Foundation of the Early Anglo-Saxon Church

The importance attached to the episcopate in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* can be perceived through the very manner in which he structured and divided up the work. Apart from the first book all the following books were largely organised to open and close with an important event concerning the episcopate. The second book opens with the death of Gregory the Great and the consecration of Mellitus and Justus as bishops of London and Rochester. It closes with the return of Paulinus from Northumbria to Kent where he became bishop of Rochester. The third book opens with King Oswald’s summoning of the Celtic missionaries from Iona and an account of the activities of Aidan as a bishop in Northumbria and closes with the restoration of the East Saxon kingdom to Christianity through the work of Bishop Jaruman. The fourth book opens with an account of Theodore of Tarsus’ appointment as archbishop of Canterbury and closes with an account of the life and subsequent miracles of Saint

²³ P. Wormald, ‘Bede and Benedict Biscop’, in *Famulus Christi*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), p.155.

Cuthbert, whose elevation to the episcopate was undoubtedly seen as a fitting reward for the holiness of his life. The final book opens with the miracles performed by John of Beverley and closes with a summary which includes a review of the occupants of episcopal sees.

In the Historia Ecclesiastica Bede sought to stress that since the beginnings of English Christianity, inaugurated by the mission sent by Pope Gregory the Great, the English Church and the *gens Anglorum* had been subject to episcopal government. Although Gregory's missionaries were monks, Bede showed that the pope conceived the nascent English Church as a Church which would be controlled and ruled by bishops.²⁴ In sending monks rather than secular clergy to act as missionaries Gregory contravened the commitment to monastic stability he had expressed in his correspondence.²⁵ Augustine was consecrated during the course of his travels through Gaul by the 'bishops of the Germanies' and arrived at Kent in the company of Frankish interpreters.²⁶ The Kentish kingdom to which Augustine came already

²⁴ HE I.23. In a letter written to Eulogus, bishop of Alexandria in 598, Gregory reported that Augustine, 'monasterii mei monachus' had baptised 10,000 Christians. Gregory the Great, Epistola VIII.29, ed. Dag Norberg, S. Gregorii Magni Registrum Epistolarum, CCSL 140A, pp.550-3, at p.551.

²⁵ Gregory the Great, Epistola VII.40, CCSL 140A, pp.504-5; J. Richards, Consul of God: the Life and Times of Gregory the Great (London, 1980), pp.228-50. R.E. Sullivan, 'The papacy and missionary activity in the early middle ages', Medieval Studies 17 (1955), pp.46-106. It has been argued that Gregory viewed monastic stability from an internal perspective in C. Straw, Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection (Berkeley, 1988), p.76.

²⁶ Gregory the Great, Epistola VIII.29, CCSL 140A, pp.550-3; HE I.25. In HE I.27 Bede recounts that Augustine was consecrated by Aetherius of Arles after the baptism of King Aethelberht but the contemporary witness of Gregory's correspondence is to be preferred see N.P. Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester, 1984), p.5.

possessed some contact with Christianity since King Aethelberht of Kent had been married to the Christian Frankish princess, Bertha, the daughter of King Charibert of Paris and his wife Ingoberg. Bertha's marriage had also led to the presence of a bishop at the Kentish court, her chaplain Liudhard.²⁷ It is possible that Liudhard had been sent with the queen to bring the Kentish people under the sphere of the Merovingian Church.²⁸ Kent clearly possessed close contacts with the Franks and Aethelberht's marriage suggests that such contacts were welcomed although his refusal to accept his wife's religion until the arrival of the missionaries from Rome may indicate a desire to resist Frankish overlordship.²⁹ This along with the fact that Kent had already received exposure to Christianity may mean that in sending the missionaries Gregory was responding to a call from England itself.³⁰ The Roman missionaries first met in the old Roman church dedicated to St Martin and after the baptism of Aethelberht settled more permanently in Canterbury, Aethelberht's chief city, where Augustine established his episcopal see. The missionaries then set about evangelising the kingdom of Kent and Augustine sent back to Rome two of his companions, the priest Laurence and the monk Peter, to secure further missionaries.

²⁷ On the existence of Christianity in England before the Gregorian mission see R. Morris, Churches in the Landscape (London, 1989), pp.6-45.

²⁸ I.N. Wood, 'Frankish hegemony in England', in Sutton Hoo, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 1992), pp.235-41; A. Angenendt, 'The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons considered against the background of early medieval mission', Settimane 32 (1986), pp.747-92 at pp.779-80.

²⁹ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent (Oxford, 1971), pp.24-32.

³⁰ Gregory the Great, Epistola VI.51, CCSL 140, pp.423-4.

A second party of missionary monks was led by the priest Laurence and abbot Mellitus. It contained Justus, Paulinus and Rufinianus who were all to play a part in the establishment of bishoprics in the various early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. They came equipped for this purpose bringing with them sacred vessels, altar cloths, church ornaments, vestments, relics and books.³¹

Gregory had outlined a model for the structure of the early English Church which envisaged it divided into two autonomous provinces based on episcopal sees at London and York. Twelve bishops were to be subject to the jurisdiction of each metropolitan. Based at London, Augustine was to have authority over the see of York but after his death York and its suffragans were to be independent and precedence between the bishops of London and York was to be accorded to the bishop who had been consecrated first. This plan was not fulfilled. Augustine did not establish his see at London but at Canterbury, the centre of Kentish royal authority. He consecrated Mellitus to take up his see at London as bishop of the East Saxons and Justus to be bishop in the Kentish city of Rochester.³² Gregory's plan, however, had established that bishops were to be at the forefront of the conversion of the English people and the structure of the English Church. The plan was therefore to greatly influence Bede's presentation of the consolidation of the Church among the early Anglo-Saxon people.

Bede's subsequent narration of the establishment of episcopal sees in the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the course of the seventh century is closely

³¹ HE I.26-27, 29.

³² HE I.29; II.3; Brooks, Church of Canterbury, ch.1.

concerned with the relationship between bishops and royal power.³³ The acceptance of missionaries by kings led to the subsequent establishment of *sedes episcopales* for bishops to serve their kingdoms. King Aethelberht of Kent ruled over the kingdom of the East Saxons as overlord and 'built the church of the apostle St Paul in the city of London, in which Mellitus and his successors were to have their episcopal seat.'³⁴ Dorchester-on-Thames became the early episcopal see of the West Saxon kingdom when it was granted to a missionary from Rome, Bishop Birinus, by Cynegisl and Oswald of Northumbria who had acted as godfather at Cynegisl's baptism. Similarly the establishment of a see at Selsey for the kingdom of the South Saxons was the result of the acceptance of the mission of Bishop Wilfrid by King Aethelwealh in the early 680s. Aethelwealh granted Wilfrid 'eighty-seven hides of land to maintain his exiled followers' where Wilfrid founded a *monasterium* which was later to become the see of Selsey.³⁵ Paulinus was consecrated bishop to accompany King Aethelberht's daughter, Aethelburh, as her chaplain when she married Edwin of Northumbria. After the conversion of Edwin, Paulinus was granted an episcopal see at York by the king who set about building 'a magnificent church of stone.' Following the establishment of the see of York, Paulinus was sent the *pallium* by

³³ On the appeal of the missionaries to the early Anglo-Saxon aristocracy see Angenendt, 'The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons considered against the background of the early medieval mission', pp.747-92; M. Richter, 'Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', in *Irland und die Christenheit*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1987), pp.362-76 and C. Stancliffe, 'Kings and Conversion: some comparisons between the Roman mission to England and Patrick's to Ireland', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 14 (1980), pp.59-94.

³⁴ *HE* II.3.

³⁵ *HE* III.3; IV.13.

Pope Honorius to elevate the see to metropolitan status in accordance with Gregory's plan. However, the papal plan to accord York metropolitan status was soon aborted in the 630s when Edwin, ruler of the northern Angles, was defeated and killed at the battle of Hatfield Chase.³⁶ The see of York was not revived until the late 660s and was then subject to interference from Canterbury. Its development as a metropolitan see was arrested until 734.³⁷ After the departure of Paulinus, the initiative in converting Northumbria then passed to the Celtic Church when Aidan was brought from Iona by King Oswald to establish his see at Lindisfarne.³⁸ During the reign of Kings Oswald and Oswiu sees and bishops were established among the Northumbrians, Mercians, East Saxons and in the kingdom of Lindsey owing allegiance to the monastic see of Lindisfarne rather than the metropolitan see of Canterbury. It was only after the Synod of Whitby in 664 where King Oswiu agreed to adopt Roman customs in the Northumbrian Church and a group of dissenting Irish clergy left the see of Lindisfarne that the authority of Canterbury was recognised in the early Christian kingdoms. The departure of Bishop Colman from Lindisfarne led to a transfer of the Northumbrian see from Lindisfarne to York. However, the new bishop, Tuda, died of the plague and his successor Wilfrid was to be replaced by Chad whilst seeking his consecration in Gaul.³⁹

Bede showed how the Gregorian plan was to influence Archbishop Theodore

³⁶ HE II.9, 14, 17, 20.

³⁷ HE III.28.

³⁸ HE III.3.

³⁹ HE III.25-28.



as he came to create new episcopal sees in the mid seventh century. Theodore's arrival led to a renewed assertion of power in the name of the see of Canterbury. His role in the appointment of bishops was a marked contrast to the earlier control of appointments exercised by kings such as Cenwalh of Wessex who had been able to appoint and depose bishops in his kingdom at will. When Theodore arrived in Britain in 669 the only sees which possessed bishops were London, where Wine had purchased episcopal office after having been expelled from the kingdom of the West Saxons, and York, where Chad had been uncanonically consecrated to the see whilst Wilfrid was in Gaul. Rochester and the kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex were all without bishops. Theodore and his successor, Berhtwold, thus attempted to carry out an overhaul of the diocesan system by asserting the authority of Canterbury as the metropolitan see of the whole of Britain and urging the creation of more bishoprics in accordance with the Gregorian plan. Theodore began by deposing Chad from York, restoring Wilfrid and appointing Chad to be bishop of the Mercians with his see at Lichfield. The power over episcopal appointments formerly wielded by kings was transferred to the archbishop. In 675 Chad's successor at Lichfield, Winfrith, was deposed and retired to his own *monasterium* at Barrow. Seaxwulf, the founder and abbot of the *monasterium* at Peterborough was ordained in his place. At Rochester when Putta deserted his see in 676 Theodore consecrated Cwichelm to replace him. Cwichelm too abandoned his see and Gefmund was appointed to replace him.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ HE IV.2-3, 6, 12. The reasons for the deposition of Winfrith are unknown and Bede emphasised that after his retirement to the *monasterium* at Barrow he 'lived a very holy life until his death.' Colgrave and Mynors suggest that, like Wilfrid, he

The desire to create further bishoprics led to an attempt to subdivide the huge existing dioceses of Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex. This assertion of metropolitan authority brought Canterbury into conflict with local interests since few bishops, especially Wilfrid, were prepared to readily acquiesce to any diminution of their territory or income.⁴¹ Haedde of Winchester managed to remain the sole West Saxon bishop until his death in 705.⁴² Theodore made an attempt to carry out substantial divisions of Wilfrid's Northumbrian diocese which had grown as the Northumbrian king, Egfrith, had extended his kingdom through victories against the Mercians, Britons, Picts and Scots. Wilfrid was expelled from his see. In 678 Theodore consecrated Bosa to the see of York and Eata to the see of Hexham and then to Lindisfarne when Bernicia was divided and Tunberht established at Hexham. The dismemberment of Wilfrid's 'empire' was taken further when Eadhaed of Lindsey was provided with a see in Wilfrid's house at Ripon and a northern see was established at Abercorn for the Picts that Egfrith's conquests had brought under English rule.⁴³ Although Wilfrid recovered his position returning first to Hexham then to York and his monastery at Ripon, the Northumbrian diocese remained divided and Wilfrid's responsibility diminished. Theodore also managed to divide the East Anglian bishopric into two sees, Dunwich and North Elmham, when Bishop Bisi of the see of Dunwich was prevented from administering his diocese by a serious

may have objected to the division of his diocese. HE IV.6 and n.1, p.354.

⁴¹ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.71-80.

⁴² HE IV.12; V.18.

⁴³ HE IV.12.

illness.⁴⁴ However, it was not until 705 under Berhtwold that the West Saxon diocese was partitioned when a new see was created for Aldhelm at Sherborne. It was also at about this time that the dispute with Wilfrid was finally resolved at the synod of Nidd. Wilfrid was to act as bishop of Hexham for the last years of his life when John of Beverley was transferred to York.⁴⁵

Gregory's outlook and concerns provided a model not only by which Bede could describe the consolidation of bishoprics in the early Anglo-Saxon Church but also which Bede himself could emulate in his admonitory letter written to Bishop Egbert of York. Bede was aware that despite the achievements of Theodore and Berhtwold there remained a discrepancy between the aims of the Gregorian plan and the realities of diocesan organisation particularly in the north. There had been a failure to sustain Ripon and Abercorn as episcopal sees in the 680s. In 734 there were only three other bishoprics in the north alongside York: Lindisfarne, Hexham, and the see of Whithorn created around 731 whereas in the south the specifications had been met.⁴⁶ Bede therefore continued to appeal to the Gregorian plan in his Letter to Egbert which functioned as a substantial indictment of the state of the Northumbrian Church in the 730s. In the letter Bede advocated the need to create a number of smaller dioceses in Northumbria because the existing sees remained too large for their incumbents. The creation of smaller dioceses would, it was hoped, ensure that all the inhabitants of the kingdom received adequate teaching. Bede was

⁴⁴ HE IV.5.

⁴⁵ HE V.18-19.

⁴⁶ HE V.23.

clearly concerned about the size of a bishop's diocese and the manner in which Christianisation was consequently affected. Large dioceses could lead to laymen rendering dues to bishops that they never saw.

For we have heard and it is rumoured, that many villages and hamlets of our people are situated in inaccessible mountains and dense woodlands where there is never seen for many years at a time a bishop to exhibit any ministry or celestial grace; not a man of which, however, is immune from rendering dues to the bishop.⁴⁷

Bede went on to stress that if such diocesan reorganisation were carried out Egbert could easily obtain metropolitan status for York.⁴⁸

Bede's concern with the place of the episcopate in securing the conversion of the *gens Anglorum* is a result not only of the Gregorian plan in shaping his concerns but also a reflection of the interests of the informants who supplied him with the written and oral information used in the composition of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁴⁹

A number of Bede's informants were bishops. Acca, bishop of Hexham, supplied him with material concerning Bishop Wilfrid and the cult of King Oswald. The community of Hexham was accustomed to undertake an annual pilgrimage on Oswald's feast-day to the site of the king's victory at Heavenfield. Acca had travelled to Rome with Wilfrid and learnt of the impact of Oswald's cult in Frisia through the missionary Willibrord. He also provided information concerning Wilfrid's

⁴⁷ Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, p.410. Trans Whitelock, *EHD*, no.170, p.738. For the Gregorian impact on Bede in general see P. Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great* (Jarrow Lecture, 1964).

⁴⁸ Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.412-13.

⁴⁹ D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965-6), pp.341-371.

evangelisation of Sussex and the foundation of a *monasterium* at Selsey on land granted by King Aethelwealh.⁵⁰ Acca narrated how a young boy learnt through a vision that the brethren of Selsey were to be saved from the plague by the intercession of Oswald.⁵¹ Bede's knowledge of the bishops of Lindsey was derived from a letter from Cyneberht, bishop of the see.⁵²

Daniel, bishop of Winchester, supplied Bede with information concerning Wessex, the Isle of Wight and Sussex. Since Bede's information concerning the West Saxons was derived from an episcopal centre his account of the Christianisation of Wessex is wholly concerned with the evangelising activities of the kingdom's early bishops. A number of these bishops had been influenced by the ecclesiastical ideas of the Irish monk Columbanus who had acted as a missionary in Gaul. Bishop Birinus, a missionary from Rome, converted King Cynegisl and was given a bishopric at Dorchester-on-Thames by the king.⁵³ James Campbell has noted that 'a plausible context for a missionary coming from northern Italy at this period is a Columbanian one.'⁵⁴ After building and dedicating churches, Birinus died and his body was later to be translated to Winchester under Bishop Haedde. King Cenwalh

⁵⁰ HE IV.13. S 232 (A.D. 683) is a spurious charter concerned with the grant of Selsey. For Wilfrid's activities in the kingdom of the South Saxons see H. Mayr-Harting, 'St Wilfrid in Sussex', in Studies in Sussex Church History, ed. M. J. Kitch (London, 1981), pp.1-17.

⁵¹ HE III.2, 13; IV.14.

⁵² HE Preface; IV.12.

⁵³ HE III.7.

⁵⁴ J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in England', in Id., Essays in Anglo-Saxon History, p.59.

received and accepted Christianity when he fled to the court of the East Anglian King, Anna, after he had been defeated by Penda of Mercia. Returning to his own kingdom he accepted Agilbert as bishop. Agilbert, who had spent some time in Ireland was a Merovingian bishop and represented the Roman party at the Synod of Whitby.⁵⁵ He returned to Gaul when Cenwalh, who disliked his inability to speak the West Saxon dialect, divided the West Saxon kingdom into two dioceses and gave the English bishop Wine a see at Winchester. After acting as bishop of Paris, Agilbert was buried at the Columbanian foundation of Jouarre where his sister Telchildis had been the first abbess.⁵⁶ Wine similarly suffered expulsion from the bishopric by Cenwalh who then requested that Agilbert return. Agilbert refused but sent his nephew from Gaul, Leuthere, who acted from Winchester as bishop of the whole kingdom.⁵⁷ Leuthere attested the foundation charter of the *monasterium* at Bath along with Wilfrid.⁵⁸ Pethhelm, bishop of Whithorn, supplied Bede with further information concerning the episcopate in Wessex. He narrated a miracle story

⁵⁵ HE III.7, 25.

⁵⁶ Campbell, 'The First Century', pp.58-60; E. Fletcher, 'The influence of Merovingian Gaul on Northumbria in the Seventh Century', Medieval Archaeology 24 (1980), pp.79-80; P. Hunter Blair, 'Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century', in Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp.30-32; R. McKitterick, 'The diffusion of insular culture in Neustria between 650 and 850: the implications of the manuscript evidence', in La Neustrie: les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850, Francia Beihefte, 16 (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp.395-431, at pp.409-12.

⁵⁷ HE III.7.

⁵⁸ P. Sims-Williams, 'St Wilfrid and two charters dated AD 676 and 680', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 39 (1988), pp.165-7.

concerning Leuthere's successor, Haedde, and was Bede's chief source of information about Aldhelm. Pethelm had been a deacon and monk with Aldhelm who became bishop of Sherborne when the West Saxon diocese was divided after Haedde's death, Daniel having been consecrated as bishop of Winchester whilst also acting as bishop on the Isle of Wight.⁵⁹

Terminology, Functions and the Activities of Episcopal Personnel

In describing the institutional structure of the early Anglo-Saxon Church, Bede used the term *monasterium* to describe every English establishment housing a religious community regardless of the status of its inmates.⁶⁰ The term could therefore apply to male houses such as Gilling (founded by Bishop Trumhere on land which was granted by King Oswiu at the request of Queen Eanflaed to atone for Oswiu's murder of Oswine), mixed houses such as Barking or all-female establishments such as Hackness.⁶¹ It was also used to describe the house at Melrose which was actively involved in providing pastoral care for the surrounding community. As prior at this *monasterium* Cuthbert 'sought to convert the neighbouring people far and wide from a life of foolish customs to a love of heavenly joys.'⁶² There were two religious houses which Bede also described by terms other

⁵⁹ HE IV.16; V.18.

⁶⁰ S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a review of terminology', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp.212-226.

⁶¹ HE III.14; IV.6, 23.

⁶² HE IV.27.

than *monasterium*. At one point he named Iona as a *plurima coenobia* and the house founded by Dicuill at Bosham he named a *monasteriolum*.⁶³ Bede was, however, careful to make one fundamental distinction between ecclesiastical communities, that between *monasteria* and *sedes episcopales*. Bede used the latter term or the term *ecclesiae* to describe all bishops' sees. The fact that episcopal sees possessed their own descriptive term is thus in itself an indication of the importance which Bede attached to the episcopate.

It is, however, necessary to qualify the assertion that Bede firmly distinguished between 'communities ruled by abbots and abbesses from those governed by bishops.'⁶⁴ Bede's terminology was rather vague and loose. His fundamental model for a religious community was derived from the communal living which characterised the lives of the earliest apostles in Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Responding to a request from Augustine of Canterbury concerning the manner in which a bishop ought to live with his clergy (*clerici*), Gregory the Great had stressed that Augustine had been trained in the rules of a monastery and that the community therefore ought to follow a communal way of life. Bede understood this as a recommendation that the senior cathedral clergy at Canterbury should adopt a monastic regime.⁶⁶ He

⁶³ *HE* III.21; IV.13.

⁶⁴ Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a review of terminology', p.219.

⁶⁵ Bede, *Libellus Retractationis in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121, pp.101-63 at pp.126-7; G. Olsen, 'Bede as Historian: The Evidence from his Observations on the Life of the First Christian Community at Jerusalem', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), pp.519-30.

⁶⁶ *HE* I.27; Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, pp.87-91.

deemed the character of the first Christian community described in Acts as an appropriate inspirational model for English cathedral clergy to adopt. He therefore described both Canterbury and Lindisfarne according to this model.⁶⁷ Both these episcopal sees, described as *sedes episcopales* or *ecclesiae*, were marked by communities which possessed an abbot as well as a bishop. It was only in the early years of the see of Canterbury when Augustine was simultaneously abbot and archbishop that a community of Roman monks, who looked to him as an abbot, and a community of secular clerks lived under one roof. It has been suggested that the foundation of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul as a separate establishment for monks outside the walls of Canterbury was an attempt to resolve this problem.⁶⁸ The foundation of such a community would not, however, indicate that the community at Christ Church immediately abandoned living under communal discipline and the foundation of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul should also be considered in relation to its role as a burial-place for the archbishops and for the kings of Kent.⁶⁹

Oswald invited monks from Iona to Northumbria granting Aidan a site for his episcopal see on Lindisfarne. Lindisfarne was also the home of an abbot who ruled the monastery established on the island and to whom the bishop himself was said to

⁶⁷ HE I.27; IV. 27; VCP 16.

⁶⁸ J. Armitage Robinson, 'The early community at Christ Church, Canterbury', *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926), pp.231-3; M. Deanesly, 'The *familia* at Christ Church, Canterbury', in *Essays in Medieval History presented to T.F. Tout* (Manchester, 1925), pp.1-13.

⁶⁹ HE I.33; Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, p.89.

be subject.⁷⁰ The precise arrangements by which Lindisfarne was simultaneously the seat of a bishop and the site of a *monasterium* remain uncertain. Aidan's English career was exclusively episcopal.⁷¹ He was both bishop and monk but did not act as abbot of the monastery. When Eata became bishop of Lindisfarne in 678 or 681 he combined the office of abbot and bishop. The offices were again separated when Cuthbert assumed the office of bishop and Herefrith was abbot.⁷² Whilst Bede stressed the communal life of both Canterbury and Lindisfarne, at Canterbury the archbishop was never subject to the authority of an abbot as this was a very un-Roman arrangement.

The terms, *sedes episcopales* and *ecclesiae* were not necessarily related to an urban context. Indeed Bede, unlike Alcuin in the Versus De Patribus Regibus Et Sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae, showed little interest in stressing the urban character of the episcopate or the bishop's role as a civic figure. The term *civitas* which he used for eighteen places in Britain and which was his normal term for Canterbury and London, could be used to describe places which possessed episcopal sees.⁷³ It was a term used to denote places which possessed an identifiable link with the Roman past. Episcopal sees could be sited in important former Roman urban areas and it

⁷⁰ HE IV.27; VCP 16.

⁷¹ J. Campbell, 'The Debt of the Early English Church to Ireland', in Irland und die Christenheit, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1987), p.337.

⁷² HE III.26; VCP 37.

⁷³ J. Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places', in Places, Names and Graves, ed. P.H. Sawyer (Leeds, 1979), pp.34-54, reprinted in Essays in Anglo-Saxon History, pp.99-119.

seems clear that this thought underlay Gregory the Great's original conception of siting metropolitan sees in London and York.⁷⁴ However, other sites of *sedes episcopales* such as Lindisfarne, Hexham and Selsey were known by the term *civitas*. The term *sedes episcopales* could be used to apply to more rural areas. It was used to describe an estate sufficient to contain a bishop. Many appropriate sites for this purpose were royal in nature and were known as *villae*.⁷⁵ A consideration which lay behind the selection of Lindisfarne as the site of an episcopal see was probably that it was close to Bamburgh, Oswald's *urbs regia*. The location of episcopal sees was thus important because it revealed the relationship between ecclesiastical and royal power.⁷⁶ Aidan was thus said to have possessed a church and a cell on a royal estate where he travelled about in the neighbourhood to preach.⁷⁷

It can be argued that Bede's lack of stress concerning the urban character of the episcopate may be related not only to the topography of England and Northumbria in particular where old Roman urban centres were relatively scarce but also to Bede's monastic milieu and the influences he had absorbed from Ireland. Emphasis upon the heavily monastic structure of the Irish Church has to some extent belittled the importance of bishops within it. The ideal of the Irish monastic *paruchia*

⁷⁴ *HE* I.29.

⁷⁵ Campbell, 'Bede's Words for Places'; Id., 'The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, p.140; P.H. Sawyer, 'The Royal Tun in Pre-Conquest England', in *Ideal and Reality*, ed. P. Wormald et al., pp.277-8.

⁷⁶ Angenendt, 'The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons considered against the background of early medieval mission', pp.767-7.

⁷⁷ *HE* III.17.

has been questioned and it has been shown that the unusual arrangements at Iona were not typical of the Irish Church as a whole. The subordination of the bishop to the abbot in Irish churches appears to have meant that the abbot controlled the temporalities of a church whilst the bishop retained jurisdiction over parochial ministry as well as a basic sacramental role.⁷⁸ However, it is clear that Ireland could not develop a diocesan system after the Roman model because of its complete absence of towns. Monasteries therefore developed a role in the life of the Church which was much greater than elsewhere in Europe and was closely linked to the fortunes of a large number of small, unstable kingdoms.⁷⁹ It is commonplace to stress the influence which Irish monasticism had upon the English Church particularly within Northumbria.⁸⁰ As a monk it is hardly surprising that Bede could find much of benefit within the Irish Church despite his intense dislike of its lack of orthodoxy in matters of discipline and customs. As a result, Bede's picture of the episcopal structure of the English Church is markedly different from the strong urban character of the episcopate found within the sources relating to the Frankish Church.⁸¹

⁷⁸ R. Sharpe, 'Some problems concerning the organisation of the church in early medieval Ireland', *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp.230-70; Id., 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland: towards a pastoral model', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp.81-109.

⁷⁹ K. Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London, 1966), chs.6-8; J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism* (Dublin, 1931). Sharpe's comments above, rightly and iconoclastically react against some of the assumptions made in these studies.

⁸⁰ K. Hughes, 'Evidence for Contacts Between the Churches of the Irish and the English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age', in *England Before the Conquest*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp.49-68.

⁸¹ S.J. Allen, 'The Role and Perception of the Civitas in Late Roman and Frankish Gaul', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1989); E. Ewig,

From the late Roman period the episcopate within the Frankish Church had been strongly urban in its outlook. With the breakdown of secular authority bishops had assumed highly administrative roles and some held the title *defensor civitatis* stressing their responsibility for maintaining the defences of the town.⁸² According to Gregory of Tours, King Chilperic was said to have commented 'there is no one with any power left except the bishops. No one respects me as king: all respect has passed to the bishops in their cities.'⁸³ Gregory of Tours rarely discussed the rural activities of bishops. Although Pappolus of Langres is recorded making a round of his diocese and the villas belonging to his see, Gregory predominantly emphasised the urban functions of bishops.⁸⁴ Leudegar of Autun and Praejectus of Clermont were both elected to sees with strong urban traditions heavily influenced by *Romanitas*.⁸⁵ Similarly the *Lives* of Desiderius of Cahors, Sulpicius of Bourges, and Nivard of Rheims stress the urban role of their subjects.⁸⁶

'Kirche und Civitas in der Merowingerzeit', *Settimane* 7 (1960), pp.45-71; M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien* (Beihefte der Francia 5, Zurich and Munich, 1976); J. Durliat, 'Les Attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens: L'exemple de Didier, évêque de Cahors (630-655)', *Annales du Midi* 91 (1979), pp.237-54; S.T. Loseby, 'Bishops and cathedrals: order and diversity in the fifth-century urban landscape of Southern Gaul', in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (Cambridge, 1992), pp.144-55.

⁸² *Vita Desiderii* 16-18, MGH SRM 4, pp.574-7.

⁸³ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI.46, MGH SRM 1, p.286.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, V.5, pp.197-8.

⁸⁵ *Passiones Leudegarii*, MGH SRM 5, pp.249-356; *Passio Praejecti*, MGH SRM 5, pp.212-48.

⁸⁶ *Vita Desiderii*, MGH SRM 4, pp.547-602; *Vita Sulpicii*, MGH SRM 4, pp.364-80; *Vita Nivardi*, MGH SRM 5, pp.157-71.

Conciliar legislation from Gaul stressed that religious observances should be celebrated in episcopal cities. At the council of Agde in 506 the bishops forbade mass in private chapels at Easter, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost and on the feast of John the Baptist stressing that on these days worship should take place in the *civitas*. The council of Orléans of 511 prevented a town-dweller (*civis*) from celebrating Easter, Christmas or Pentecost at his *villa* unless he were ill. Citizens were exhorted not to celebrate Easter at private oratories but to go into the episcopal city for the festival at the Council of Orléans in 541.⁸⁷ In Gaul cities were the focus of devotion and the site of major festivals because of the number of saints relics they possessed. Saints were commonly thought to be the protectors and guardians of cities. St Martin came to be perceived as a defender of Tours. Nicetius, bishop of Trier, defended the city from bubonic plague and the tomb of Remigius of Rheims performed a similar function.⁸⁸ When a priest complained that Nicetius of Lyons had left nothing to the church in which he was buried, he received a nocturnal visit from the saint who punched him in the throat.⁸⁹ Although the arrival and subsequent impact of Columbanus had given some bishops notably Eligius of Noyon and Audoenus of Rouen an interest in the rural affairs of their diocese their sees remained

⁸⁷ Council of Agde 506, *Concilia Galliae*, ed. C. Munier, CCSL 148, canon 21, pp.202-3; Council of Orleans 511, *Concilia Galliae*, ed. C. de Clercq, CCSL 148A, canon 25, p.11; Council of Orleans 541, *Ibid.*, canon 3, p.132.

⁸⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, *De Vita Sancti Martini*, VI, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 16, pp.138-159; Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi* 2.25, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.617-8; *Liber Vitae Patrum* 17.4, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.731-2; *Liber in Gloria Confessorum* 78, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.794-6.

⁸⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Liber Vitae Patrum*, 8.5, pp.695-6.

in urban sites.⁹⁰ One of the most notable indigenous Frankish monastic founders and a wandering rural missionary was Amandus who was briefly bishop of Maastricht.⁹¹ However, figures such as him were the exception rather than the rule within the Frankish Church. A further explanation for the contrast between the urban character of the Frankish episcopate and Bede's accounts of English bishops may lie within the fact that the English Church which Bede described was in a missionary situation and still in the process of being consolidated and defined. Ecclesiastical structures were not fully formulated by Bede's time but had developed in a random fashion in response to the need to secure and consolidate the conversion of kings and their subjects. In the later eighth century when Alcuin composed his York Poem, the nature of an episcopal community in the English Church had been more clearly defined by conciliar and prescriptive legislation and this in part explains Alcuin's concentration upon bishops as civic figures.⁹²

If one turns to consider the terminology used by Bede to describe the chief occupants of *sedes episcopales*, the bishops themselves, one finds that this also was not clear cut. In describing bishops, Bede commonly used the terms *episcopus*, *praesul* and *antistes* often varying such terms for stylistic effect. However, bishops could also be designated through the use of the term *sacerdos* which denoted a priest. Tuda who became bishop of Lindisfarne after the departure of Colman following the

⁹⁰ P. Fouracre, 'The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon in Extending Episcopal Influence From the Town to the Country in Seventh-Century Neustria', *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), pp.77-91.

⁹¹ *Vita Amandi*, MGH SRM 5, pp.395-449.

⁹² See Chapter five below.

Synod of Whitby was described as *sacerdos* when Bede narrated how he was killed by plague.⁹³ When Acca, bishop of Hexham, wrote to Bede requesting a commentary on Luke he referred to him as ‘frater et consacerdos.’⁹⁴ Although Bede ‘had grown up amidst a system of dioceses based on sees’⁹⁵, he commonly identified a bishop with the people over whom he possessed authority. Hence the bishop’s diocese was coterminous with the kingdom he served. This was particularly the case with peoples who had been newly evangelised. Thus after the death of the pagan king, Penda of Mercia, the resurgence of Mercian Christianity when the kingdom came under the control of King Oswiu led to Diuma being consecrated bishop of the Middle Angles and the Mercians.⁹⁶ Cedd appears to have had no fixed see. Although Bede described him as acting as bishop of the East Saxons, he did not describe him as bishop of London nor recount his involvement with that see. Furthermore although Cedd established communities of religious at Bradwell-on-Sea and Tilbury to assist him in his missionary work neither was the site of an episcopal see.⁹⁷ The non-diocesan character of Cedd’s episcopacy is also evident through the fact that he acted as abbot of Lastingham, a *monasterium* that was not in his own diocese.⁹⁸ Those bishops whom Bede identified through the people they served seem to have been

⁹³ HE III.26, 27.

⁹⁴ Bede, In Lucam, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p.5.

⁹⁵ H. Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England 3rd edn. (London, 1991), p.95.

⁹⁶ HE III.21.

⁹⁷ HE III.23, 22.

⁹⁸ HE III.23, 28.

educated in the Irish tradition and envisaged their bishoprics in tribal terms. Those educated in the Roman tradition were identified through the sees they served. Thus Paulinus was named bishop of York and Cwichelm bishop of Rochester.⁹⁹ However, the multifarious nature of the early Anglo-Saxon Church prevents any firm generalisations from being made with regard to the manner in which Bede described episcopal institutions and bishops themselves. Frankish, Irish and Roman elements were involved in a close interweaved relationship and it is difficult and unnecessary to separate them.

Bede's account of the conversion in the Historia Ecclesiastica was concerned with describing episcopal succession in various sees.¹⁰⁰ The evidence Bede provided for this is fragmentary given the nature of the sources at his disposal. The fullest account of episcopal succession in the Northumbrian Church concerns the see of Lindisfarne. The diocese of Lindisfarne spread over a wide area and as a monastic see Lindisfarne possessed links with the monastic houses of Iona and Melrose which affected the appointment of its bishops. The first three bishops of Lindisfarne: Aidan, Finan, and Colman were all former monks of Iona.¹⁰¹ King Oswiu's decision to follow Roman rather than Irish practices at the synod of Whitby in 664 broke the hold Iona had established over the Northumbrian Church and thereafter the bishops appointed to Lindisfarne possessed links with the *monasterium* at Melrose. Eata who

⁹⁹ HE II.14; IV.12.

¹⁰⁰ C.Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England c.600-c.800', Northern History 25 (1989), pp.18-38.

¹⁰¹ HE III.3, 5, 17, 25; IV.4.

replaced Wilfrid at Hexham in 678 and governed the Bernician diocese later ruled from Lindisfarne. He was the former abbot of Melrose and had become abbot of Lindisfarne itself after the synod of Whitby. His successor, St Cuthbert, had held the position of prior at the two monasteries. After the death of Cuthbert, Lindisfarne was administered by Wilfrid for a year. Wilfrid possessed connections with the see of Lindisfarne since he had been an inmate of the monastery as a youth.¹⁰² Bede provided little information concerning Eadberht and Eadfrith but stated that Aethelwold had been Cuthbert's servant and later priest, prior, and abbot at Melrose.¹⁰³ Thus Bede carefully showed that training at a monastic house was essential to the background of all the bishops of Lindisfarne.

Bede's exploration of the interconnected relationship between Iona, Melrose and Lindisfarne further emphasises how he was concerned with the monastic nature of the episcopate. This concern can also be seen with regard to the see of York and its relationships with the monastic house of Whitby. Bosa, John of Beverley, and Wilfrid II were all appointed to the see of York having been educated as monks at Whitby. The *monasterium* at Whitby was a notable early Northumbrian ecclesiastical centre, possessing the body of King Edwin the founder of the see of York where his head was said to be housed.¹⁰⁴ Whitby also provided bishops for other sees. Aetla became bishop of Dorchester and Oftfor acted as bishop of the Hwicce having been

¹⁰² HE III.26; IV.27, 29; V.19.

¹⁰³ HE V.12; VCP 30.

¹⁰⁴ Anon, Vita S. Gregorii Magni 18-19, ed. B. Colgrave, The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great (Kansas, 1968); HE II.20.

consecrated by Wilfrid who at that time was acting as bishop of the Middle Angles.¹⁰⁵ The importance Bede assigned to particular monastic houses could thus be related to their connections with the episcopate. Bede's account of John of Beverley was dependent upon the preservation of an oral tradition by Berthun, abbot of Beverley. John retained close connections with Beverley and retired to the *monasterium* in his later years having consecrated his priest, Wilfrid II, as bishop of York. He was also buried in the *monasterium* rather than in the cathedral church.¹⁰⁶ In recounting the career of Benedict Biscop, Bede told of how he spent a period of his life as a monk in Gaul at the monastery of Lérins which was noted for supplying a number of bishops to the Gallic Church.¹⁰⁷ Although Benedict Biscop himself never became a bishop, this further serves to reveal the importance which Bede's monastic vision accorded to the relationship between monasticism and the episcopate. Bede's own monastic community at Wearmouth and Jarrow was also closely linked to the see of Lindisfarne as is evident through the fact that he was commissioned to compose a prose Life of Saint Cuthbert at the request of Bishop Eadfrith and the Lindisfarne community.¹⁰⁸

Bede also described the early pattern of episcopal succession in the metropolitan see of Canterbury. It is notable that although Canterbury had originally

¹⁰⁵ HE III.24; IV.23.

¹⁰⁶ HE V.2-6.

¹⁰⁷ HA 2; R.A. Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity (Cambridge, 1990), pp.194-6; F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich (Munich and Vienna, 1965), pp.47-87.

¹⁰⁸ VCP Prologue.

been associated with a monastic regime and the first five archbishops had all been monastic members of the Gregorian missions, the archbishops were not primarily noted for their monastic outlook. Mellitus and Justus were elevated from the rank of bishop to archbishop. Mellitus had been bishop of London and Justus bishop of Rochester. Neither sees were associated with monastic houses. Wigheard had been trained by the Gregorian missionaries but Bede did not state that he was a monk.¹⁰⁹ Theodore of Tarsus was originally a monk but his role at Canterbury was that of a teacher and administrator concerned with undertaking an overhaul of the diocesan system which created new episcopal sees.¹¹⁰ Bede was not unconcerned with the influence of monastic sites and ideals in formulating the character of Canterbury as a metropolitan see. Theodore was succeeded by Berhtwold who had been abbot of the Kentish *monasterium* at Reculver and his successor Tatwine had been a priest in the *monasterium* of Breedon in Mercia.¹¹¹ However, it was in areas evangelised by ecclesiastics who possessed some contact with the Irish ecclesiastical tradition where Bede showed the links between *monasteria* and *sedes episcopales* to be more pronounced. Thus the kingdom of the South Saxons had been administered by Daniel of Winchester but during his missionary activities the Northumbrian Wilfrid, who had spent an early part of his education at Lindisfarne, had founded a *monasterium* in the kingdom at Selsey. This became the site of an episcopal see and its abbot,

¹⁰⁹ HE II.3-4, 7, 8, 18; III.20, 28-9; IV.1-2; V.19; HA 3.

¹¹⁰ HE IV.1-3, 12.

¹¹¹ HE V.8, 23.

Eadberht, became its first bishop.¹¹²

It is noticeable that the accounts of episcopal succession given by Bede differ from the succession of abbots or abbesses in *monasteria*. Although it appears to have been quite common for a bishop to designate his own successor and the candidate chosen for the succession had often been closely associated with the present or recently deceased bishop, the candidate was not shown to be related to the previous bishop. Augustine consecrated Laurence to succeed him in Canterbury in order to secure the future survival of the see. When he retired to the *monasterium* at Beverley, John of Beverley appointed his priest, Wilfrid II, to succeed him in the see of York. St Cuthbert resigned his see at Lindisfarne to take up the hermit's life. Aethelwold who succeeded Eadberht and Eadfrith in the see of Lindisfarne had acted as Cuthbert's servant.¹¹³ Winfrith who succeeded Chad as bishop of Mercia, the Middle Angles and Lindsey had been Chad's deacon 'for some considerable time.'¹¹⁴ Felix of East Anglia was also succeeded by his deacon, Thomas.¹¹⁵ However, unlike the succession of abbots and abbesses, episcopal succession does not seem to have been hereditary.¹¹⁶ At the *monasterium virginum* of Watton, Abbess

¹¹² HE V.18.

¹¹³ HE II.3-4, V.6, 12; VCP 30.

¹¹⁴ HE IV.3.

¹¹⁵ HE II.20.

¹¹⁶ The exception to this concerns the episcopal governance of the kingdom of the West Saxons since having been expelled from his see and returned to Gaul, Agilbert, when asked by Cenwalh to return as bishop sent his nephew Leuthere instead. HE III.7. This practice may have owed much to the Frankish origins of the bishops in question.

Hereburh planned to make her daughter abbess in her place.¹¹⁷ At Whitby the royal virgin Aelfflaed 'presided over the monastery with her mother Eanflaed.'¹¹⁸ Cedd died at the *monasterium* of Lastingham and his brother Chad succeeded him.¹¹⁹ This practice was not without its critics. Concern over the succession at Wearmouth and Jarrow caused Benedict Biscop to warn the monks of Wearmouth against supporting a kinsman as his successor. He insisted that in electing an abbot upright life and sound doctrine should be the prime considerations, and a man was not to be appointed as *abbas* because of his birth.¹²⁰ Bede was aware of the dangers of the fact that ecclesiastical land, freed from the normal secular burdens of providing labour and food-rents to a king or ealdorman, could fall into the wrong hands and condemned such pseudo-monasteries in the Letter to Egbert.

But others by a still heavier crime, since they are laymen and not experienced in the usages of the life according to the rule or possessed by the love of it, give money to kings, and under the pretext of founding monasteries buy lands on which they may more freely devote themselves to lust, and in addition cause them to be ascribed to them in hereditary right by royal edicts, and even get those same documents of their privileges confirmed, as if by truth worthy of God, by the subscription of bishops, abbots and secular persons.¹²¹

Bede's accounts of episcopal succession also differed noticeably from those

¹¹⁷ HE V.3.

¹¹⁸ HE IV.26.

¹¹⁹ HE III.23.

¹²⁰ HA 11.

¹²¹ Bede, Epistola ad Egbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, p.415. Trans Whitelock, EHD, no.170, p.741.

found on the continent in the Frankish Church.¹²² In some dioceses in Merovingian Gaul, individual families came close to obtaining a monopoly over succession to the episcopate. Gregory of Tours insisted that he was related to all but five of the preceding eighteen bishops of his see.¹²³ Gregorius the great-grandfather of Gregory of Tours became bishop of Langres and Dijon and after he died his son, Tetricius, became bishop at Langres.¹²⁴ One of Tetricius' immediate successors as bishop was a relative. In an epitaph for Tetricius, Venantius Fortunatus claimed that the cities of Langres and Dijon had become a family see.¹²⁵ Cronopius of Périgueux was said to have 'inherited membership among bishops' from both his mother and father, and 'his episcopal see was part of the family legacy.'¹²⁶ Gregory of Tours' immediate predecessor in the see had been Eufronius, his mother's cousin.¹²⁷

Once he was established in the metropolitan see of Canterbury, Augustine asked for the advice of Gregory the Great concerning a number of ecclesiastical matters and Bede recorded Gregory's responses. One of Augustine's questions concerned the manner in which bishops should be consecrated and whether they could be consecrated by a single bishop. Consecration in the Celtic Church was often

¹²² R. Van Dam, Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul (Berkeley, 1985), pp.202-229; E. James, The Origins of France. From Clovis to the Capetians (London, 1982), pp.49-63; Heinzelmänn, Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien, pp.211-31.

¹²³ Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum V.49, MGH SRM 1, pp.240-42.

¹²⁴ Gregory of Tours, Liber Vitae Patrum 7.4, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.689-90.

¹²⁵ Venantius Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 4.3.2, MGH AA 4.1, p.80, '*patriae sedes*'.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.8.7-8, p.84.

¹²⁷ Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum IV.15, MGH SRM 1, p.152.

carried out by a single bishop and Gregory therefore ordered that Augustine should create new bishops to enable consecration to be carried out in the presence of three or four bishops according to the Roman model.¹²⁸ Due to the lack of bishops in the early conversion period a number of consecrations took place in Gaul. Augustine was consecrated in Gaul as were Wine, Wilfrid and Berhtwold.¹²⁹ Cedd had been consecrated by Bishop Finan of Lindisfarne and two other Celtic bishops.¹³⁰ This illustrates that even in the Celtic Church consecration by more than a single bishop was considered desirable. It is noticeable that unlike that of his brother, Chad, Cedd's consecration was not called into question when Archbishop Theodore undertook his visitation of the English kingdoms and began to create further bishops. Chad resigned from the see of York and had to be reconsecrated when it was discovered that he had been consecrated by Wine and two British bishops.¹³¹ This may point to a distinction made by Bede between those who had been consecrated by Irish bishops and those consecrated by the British, deeming only the latter to be uncanonically consecrated.

For Bede bishops were perceived as the descendants of Peter, the order of the episcopate began with the apostles.¹³² Candidates for ordination were to be free

¹²⁸ HE I.27.

¹²⁹ HE I.27; III.7, 28; V.8, 11, 19, 24.

¹³⁰ HE III.22.

¹³¹ HE III.28; IV.2.

¹³² Bede, Opera Homiletica, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, pp.116, 146; De Tabernaculo, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, p.112; In Lucam, pp.213-4.

from avarice and greed, just and saintly and must either have remained in a state of virginity or loosened the bonds of marital union.¹³³ The major functions of both bishops and priests were the administration of the sacraments, the primary elements which constituted the ecclesiastical community, and the preaching of the word as a bulwark against heresy.¹³⁴ Certain ecclesiastical functions were reserved to the episcopate alone. Bishops alone could consecrate the holy oil used in the anointing of the sick.¹³⁵ In his commentary on Acts, Bede reproduced a letter written by Pope Innocent to Decentius which specified that the administration of confirmation should be reserved to bishops.¹³⁶

In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede especially praised bishops whose episcopal authority was marked by the cultivation of a spirit of poverty.¹³⁷ This in part was a result of Bede's monastic background since poverty had been a virtue which was emphasised in the Rule of St Benedict.¹³⁸ Bishop Aidan rarely dined with the king.

¹³³ Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis Libri IIII*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, pp.122-3; *De Tabernaculo*, pp.95-7, 121.

¹³⁴ Bede, *In Lucam*, p.417; *De Templo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, pp.162, 217-8; *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, pp.261-3; *De Tabernaculo*, pp.80-1, 83.

¹³⁵ Bede, *In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121, pp.221-2.

¹³⁶ Bede, *Super Acta Apostolorum Expositio*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121, p.39. Innocent's letter to Decentius PL 20, cols. 554B-555A. Cf. Bede, *Libri Quatuor In Principium Genesis Usque ad Navitatem Isaac et Eiectionem Ismahelis Adnotationum*, ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A, p.124; Bede, *In Marcum*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p.443.

¹³⁷ M.T.A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings* (Washington, 1946), pp.236-41; Olsen, 'Bede as Historian', pp.522-3.

¹³⁸ *Regula Sancti Benedicti* 33, ed. A. De Vogüé and J. Neufville, SC 182 (Paris, 1971-72), p.562.

He was also said to care little for worldly possessions handing over to the poor the gifts he received from kings. He gave food rather than money to *potentes* who visited him.¹³⁹ Colman left Lindisfarne with a reputation for frugality and austerity. He and his predecessors 'had no money but only cattle.' The priests and clerics from the see of Lindisfarne who visited villages to undertake pastoral duties were said to be so free from avarice that 'none of them would accept lands or possessions to build monasteries, unless compelled to by the secular authorities.'¹⁴⁰ Augustine and his companions also attempted to emulate the life of the primitive church accepting 'only the necessities of life', and after Boisil had prophesied that Cuthbert was to become a bishop, Cuthbert feared that in accepting episcopal office he might be tempted by the love of wealth.¹⁴¹ As a bishop he therefore practised a life of frugality and 'rejoiced to preserve the rigours of monastic life', giving food to the hungry and clothes to the suffering.¹⁴² This praise of episcopal poverty was clearly intended by Bede to instruct the bishops of his own day. He deliberately refrained from casting judgement on the Church in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* believing that it was wrong to denounce evil priests in public.¹⁴³ However, in the *Letter to Egbert* he attacked bishops who had with them 'no men of any religion or continence' and were 'given to laughter, jests, tales, feasting and drunkenness, and the other attractions of a lax

¹³⁹ *HE* III.5.

¹⁴⁰ *HE* III.26.

¹⁴¹ *HE* I.26; *VCP* 8.

¹⁴² *VCP* 26.

¹⁴³ Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, pp.135, 244-5.

life.’ Such men were said to have extracted ecclesiastical dues from villages and hamlets they never visited.¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere Bede condemned clergy who preferred the rich to the dispossessed having little sympathy for avaricious churchmen whose behaviour belied their words.¹⁴⁵ Their avarice clearly contrasted with the holy men of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede carefully handled his material in order to teach that bishops ought to be poor. This accounts for the fact that he failed to mention the treasures associated with Cuthbert such as his pectoral cross and that, unlike Eddius Stephanus, he did not state that Wilfrid thought it necessary for his abbeys to have treasures in order to purchase the favour of bishops and kings.¹⁴⁶

Preaching was one of Bede’s principal concerns. The proclamation of the Gospel from the most rudimentary explanations of the faith to the most profound exposition of the Scriptures was the most dignifying activity within which one could engage and was assigned a near sacramental significance.¹⁴⁷ Although he wrote widely about the importance of preaching Bede, unlike Augustine, never wrote a systematic manual on the subject.¹⁴⁸ Bede described the activities of a spiritual elite, the *sancti praedicatores, rectores* or *doctores ecclesiae*, who were guardians of souls

¹⁴⁴ Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.407, 410-11, 419-21.

¹⁴⁵ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, p.359.

¹⁴⁶ On the treasures associated with Cuthbert see *The Relics of St. Cuthbert*, ed. C.F. Battiscombe (Oxford, 1956), pp.308-25. On Wilfrid’s treasures *VW* 63.

¹⁴⁷ Bede, *In Lucam*, pp.120, 339-41; Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, p.130.

¹⁴⁸ T.R. Eckenrode, ‘The Venerable Bede and the Pastoral Affirmation of the Christian Message in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Downside Review* 99 (1981), p.269.

exhorted to convert the heathen.¹⁴⁹ These ideas were largely derived from the views about preaching and teaching expressed by Gregory the Great in various homilies, the Moralia in Job and the Liber Regulae Pastoralis. Although Bede used these terms in a wide context and related them to the unordained, it is hard to concede that 'he deliberately refrained from identifying his *doctores* and *praedicatores* with the ordained hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons'¹⁵⁰ since he described Paulinus as 'doctori atque antistiti.'¹⁵¹ Bede used the word *doctor* simply to mean teacher or instructor and applied it to both the ordained and the unordained. It is clear, however, that he did not envisage preaching as an activity narrowly limited to a particular set of ecclesiastics. In a homily he spoke of how a wide range of figures including laymen could be spiritual pastors and elsewhere stressed how the obligation to build up the house of God devolved upon all the faithful.¹⁵² In De Templo, he wrote of a priesthood of all believers and he even envisaged women preachers.¹⁵³ He also considered that ordination need not be a chief characteristic of the effective preacher but that the spirit of poverty, an absence of hatred, and the integration of learning with wisdom were essential.¹⁵⁴ However, although potentially every

¹⁴⁹ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp.130-1; Id., 'Monks, preaching and pastoral Care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, pp.152-3.

¹⁵⁰ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p.131.

¹⁵¹ HE II.14.

¹⁵² Bede, Opera Homiletica, p.49; Bede, In Ezram et Neemiam, p.277.

¹⁵³ Bede, De Templo, p.194; In Ezram et Neemiam, p.257.

¹⁵⁴ Bede, In Lucam, pp.55-6, 120, 148, 283-4, 422-3; In Ezram et Neemiam, pp.88, 283-4; Opera Homiletica, pp.122, 135-6.

Christian had a duty to act as an evangelist and speak the word in reality preaching devolved upon individuals through their ability to effectively perform it.

Despite Bede's insistence that preaching of some form or other was an activity in which all could engage the accounts of preaching in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* concern themselves with the work of bishops (some of whom were also monks). As soon as Augustine and the Roman missionaries had been granted a dwelling in Canterbury 'they preached the word of life to as many as they could.'¹⁵⁵ Paulinus on his arrival at Edwin's court set to work by preaching. Agilbert, a Frank who had studied in Ireland, came to Wessex under Cenwealh attached himself to the king and voluntarily undertook the task of preaching, and Chad travelled on foot preaching in town and countryside.¹⁵⁶ The main missionary group in East Anglia was centred around the figure of Bishop Felix. King Sigeberht had been introduced to Christianity whilst an exile in Gaul. Felix who had been consecrated in Gaul arrived in England from Burgundy and was sent to preach to the East Anglian kingdom by Archbishop Honorius. Sigeberht granted him a see at Dunwich.¹⁵⁷ Wilfrid was active in Northumbria and Mercia and during his turbulent career also preached in Frisia and converted the South Saxons.¹⁵⁸ After returning from Rome, Otfar went to the kingdom of the Hwicce where 'he remained for a long time, preaching the word of

¹⁵⁵ *HE* I.26.

¹⁵⁶ *HE* II.9; III.7, 28.

¹⁵⁷ *HE* II.15; III.18.

¹⁵⁸ *HE* III.28; IV. 13, 23; V.19.

faith and setting an example of holy life to all who saw and heard him.¹⁵⁹ Wilfrid's ability to convert the South Saxons contrasted with the labours of the Irish monk, Dicuill, who had established a *monasteriolum* at Bosham 'in which five or six brothers served the Lord in humility and poverty.' However, 'none of the natives cared to follow their way of life or listen to their preaching.'¹⁶⁰ This reveals Bede's emphasis upon preaching and conversion which was carried out by bishops working through official channels in the Church rather than by peripatetic monks. It also points to his concern to emphasise the triumph of Roman orthodoxy over Celtic particularism.

The ability to build up a reputation for preaching and evangelisation was one means by which a priest could be elevated to the episcopate. Cedd had initially been dispatched to the East Saxons to preach as a priest where he 'traversed the whole kingdom and built up a great Church for the Lord.'¹⁶¹ Returning to Lindisfarne he was consecrated as bishop of the East Saxons by Finan and was subsequently responsible for the foundation of pastoral centres at Tilbury and Bradwell-on-Sea staffed by priests and deacons to assist him 'in preaching the word of faith and in the administration of baptism.'¹⁶² The missionary work of other bishops was also marked by the foundation of churches which became centres from which the bishops would preach. Birinus established as bishop of Dorchester by King Cynegisl of the

¹⁵⁹ HE IV.23.

¹⁶⁰ HE IV.13.

¹⁶¹ HE III.22.

¹⁶² Ibid.

West Saxons and Oswald of Northumbria (who acted as Cynegisl's godfather), 'built and dedicated churches and brought many to the Lord by his pious labours.'¹⁶³ Aidan's arrival at Lindisfarne was marked by the building of churches in various places where 'the people flocked together with joy to hear the Word.'¹⁶⁴ The churches which bishops founded were often associated with royal estates or the estates of lay *comites*. John of Beverley was called to dedicate churches on the estates of the *gesiths* Puch and Addi. Aidan possessed a church and a cell on a royal estate from where he travelled about in the neighbourhood to preach. Paulinus built a church on the site of a royal dwelling at *Campodonoum* but it was burnt down and only the stone altar survived.¹⁶⁵

Bede viewed Cuthbert in a Gregorian context as an exemplary *rector*, *doctor* and *praedicator*.¹⁶⁶ In a similar manner to Cedd the fame which Cuthbert had acquired as a preacher and teacher whilst a prior at Melrose was partially responsible for his elevation to the episcopate. As a prior he preached to the inhabitants of remote villages whose poverty and ignorance prevented others from visiting them. As a bishop he maintained and intensified his devotion to preaching by undertaking extensive preaching tours where he diligently traversed his diocese to bring the ministry of the word and consolation to the poor.¹⁶⁷ Bede's preoccupation with

¹⁶³ HE III.7.

¹⁶⁴ HE III.3.

¹⁶⁵ HE II.14; III.17; IV.4-5.

¹⁶⁶ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp.133-142.

¹⁶⁷ VCP 9, 27-35; HE IV.27-8.

preaching as a function of the episcopate continued throughout his own life. In the letter which he addressed to Egbert of York in 734 he explicitly informed Egbert of the importance of preaching.

to this office you were chosen by the Lord and to this you were consecrated, that you might preach the word with great virtue...collect to you the inhabitants of the place and reveal to them the word of exhortation, and at the same time, as if the leader of a heavenly troop, set an example of living, along with all who come with you.¹⁶⁸

The bishop was also exhorted to appoint assistants to help him in his task 'by ordaining priests and instituting teachers, who may devote themselves to preaching the word of God in the various villages'¹⁶⁹ because the distances between the places belonging to his diocese were too great for one individual to cover the whole diocese.

Since Bede was preoccupied with narrating the history of the conversion of the English people, the sacrament which he emphasised most significantly was that of baptism.¹⁷⁰ Baptism constituted the means by which believers were freed from the bondage of the devil and admitted to the fellowship of the Church. Like preaching Bede did not envisage baptism as the exclusive prerogative of bishops but bishops are again predominantly shown administering the sacrament in the Historia Ecclesiastica. Bede's accounts of the administration of baptism by bishops are set in a missionary context and emphasise the public and collective nature of the ritual. Edwin of Northumbria was baptised by Paulinus in York in a hastily constructed

¹⁶⁸ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer I, p.408. Trans Whitelock, EHD, no.170, p.737.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ S. Foot, 'By water in the spirit: The administration of baptism in early Anglo-Saxon England', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, pp.171-93.

church of wood he had specially built for the occasion. Paulinus baptised many candidates in the open air at Yeavinger spending thirty-six days there occupied with catechising and baptising. After the crowds had received instruction 'he washed them in the waters of the river Glen which was close at hand.' In Deira he performed baptism in the river Swale near Catterick as chapels and baptisteries had not yet been built.¹⁷¹ Bishop Finan of Lindisfarne baptised Peada of the Middle Angles at a royal estate called *Ad Murum*. He also baptised Sigebert of the East Saxons at the same place.¹⁷² Wilfrid's mission to the South Saxons involved extensive baptisms including those of male and female slaves.¹⁷³ The picture of baptism obtained from Bede's accounts primarily involves bishops baptising adults although when kings were baptised their children received baptism alongside them. Bede clearly believed that infants should be baptised urging parents to make a declaration of faith on their behalf at the font.¹⁷⁴ However, his description of baptism in a missionary context contrasts with the picture of baptism provided by conciliar legislation promulgated once Christianity had become more firmly established where infant baptism appears to have been the norm. Given the paucity of bishops in seventh-century England it was customary for Bede to describe how a bishop ordained priests and deacons to aid

¹⁷¹ HE II.14. On baptismal places see R. Morris, 'Baptismal Places 600-800', in People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600. Essays in Honour of P.H. Sawyer, ed. I.N. Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp.15-24.

¹⁷² HE III.21-2.

¹⁷³ HE IV.13.

¹⁷⁴ Bede, In Marcum, p.525; J. Lynch, Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe (Princeton, New Jersey, 1986), p.243.

him in the task of performing the baptismal rite since large numbers of people were baptised. Thus Paulinus performed the rite accompanied by James the Deacon and Cedd ordained priests and deacons to assist him in the administration of baptism.¹⁷⁵

The baptismal rite involved catechising and exorcism.¹⁷⁶ The latter was accomplished by blowing on the face so as to drive out impure spirits. The process of catechising could be quite prolonged and extensive. Although he gave Paulinus his infant daughter to be baptised, Edwin of Northumbria was said to have been unwilling to accept Christianity without consideration and set about learning the faith systematically from Paulinus. Despite receiving a letter from Pope Boniface urging him to convert, the king was only finally persuaded to accept the faith after a vision he experienced whilst in exile at the court of King Raedwald.¹⁷⁷ Bede emphasised how bishops were particularly equipped to undertake the process of catechetical teaching. His account of John of Beverley's baptism of Herebald, a member of the bishop's own clergy, seems designed to prove the superiority of the bishop's ability to teach the catechism over that of an intellectually incapable priesthood. John decided that the baptism Herebald had received at the hands of a slow-witted and ignorant priest who was unable to learn the office of baptism or catechism was invalid and subsequently rebaptised the cleric.¹⁷⁸

Baptism was closely related to the laying on of hands which conferred the

¹⁷⁵ HE II.16, 20; III.22.

¹⁷⁶ HE V.6.

¹⁷⁷ HE II.9-12.

¹⁷⁸ HE V.6.

Holy Spirit, an ecclesiastical function which completed the baptismal rite and was reserved to the episcopate.¹⁷⁹ Bede was particularly concerned about the administration of this rite. Although it is unclear it is possible that the absence of unction from their performance of the baptismal rite was one element which divided the British bishops from Augustine at the conference held at Augustine's Oak.¹⁸⁰ In the Letter to Egbert Bede based his arguments for the creation of more bishoprics partly upon the fact that people may not have received the laying on of hands as a result of a bishop undertaking 'the charge of a greater portion of the people than he can by any means reach by his preaching and visit in the whole space of a year.'¹⁸¹ This comment may be significantly contrasted with the picture of Cuthbert's zealous concern to lay hands on villagers in mountainous regions where he operated from tents.¹⁸² Bede therefore sought to remind Egbert of the importance assigned to the laying on of hands when he wrote.

If we believe and confess that any advantage is conferred on the faithful by the laying on of hands, by which the Holy Spirit is received, it follows, on the contrary, that this same advantage is absent from those who have lacked the laying on of hands.¹⁸³

The involvement of bishops in administering the eucharist to the laity is not as prominently discussed in Bede's account of the conversion as their involvement

¹⁷⁹ Bede, In Genesim, p.124; In Marcum, p.443.

¹⁸⁰ HE II.2.

¹⁸¹ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer I, pp.411-12.

¹⁸² VCP 29, 32.

¹⁸³ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer I, p.411. Trans Whitelock, EHD, no.170, p.739.

with the sacrament of baptism. Bede's accounts of the sacrament largely concern its reception by the inmates of communal religious communities particularly those individuals on the point of death. Chad prepared for his death by receiving the eucharist in an oratory. A boy in the monastery of Selsey had a vision where the apostles informed him that through the intercession of Saint Oswald, he would die and be taken to heaven after receiving the eucharist.¹⁸⁴ In recounting Cuthbert's pastoral visits and preaching, Bede did not discuss the reception of the eucharist by the laity. It is clear, however, that Bede expected bishops to regularly administer the sacrament and the faithful to regularly receive it, ideally every Sunday.¹⁸⁵ In the Letter to Egbert he wrote, 'how salutary for every class of Christian is the daily partaking of the body and blood of our Lord.'¹⁸⁶ Recounting the apostasy of the East Saxons on the death of Saeberht, he told of how the bishop refused to give a group of apostates bread because they would not be baptised.¹⁸⁷ Bede's fullest discussion of the place of the eucharist within the conversion appears not in his own recounting of events but in his reproduction of the Libellus Responsionum of Gregory the Great.¹⁸⁸ Gregory's responses to Augustine's questions displayed a strict attitude towards the taking of communion by the sexually active which is similarly found in

¹⁸⁴ HE IV.3, 14.

¹⁸⁵ Bede, In Marcum, p.520.

¹⁸⁶ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer I, p.419.

¹⁸⁷ HE II.5.

¹⁸⁸ HE I.27.

penitential literature.¹⁸⁹

Bede rarely discussed episcopal involvement in the burial of the dead as a pastoral duty.¹⁹⁰ He described how Sebbi, king of the East Saxons, summoned the bishop of London and two of his servants to his death bed but his references to the involvement of bishops in burial usually involve burial activity within religious communities themselves.¹⁹¹ Cedd was granted land on which to establish a *monasterium* by King Oethelwald of Deira. Oethelwald's motives for making the grant were that Oethelwald might come to the establishment to 'pray and hear the Word' and that he might be buried there.¹⁹² The prose Life of Saint Cuthbert featured a lengthy description of Cuthbert's own death and his instructions for his burial but given Cuthbert's gift for working miracles his own contact with the dying involved miraculous cures rather than the need for burial. Donald Bullough has commented that 'none of his pastoral acts or miracles is linked with any burial place or tomb except, finally, his own.'¹⁹³ Bishop Eadberht of Lindisfarne was actively involved in the elevation of Cuthbert's body eleven years after his death. He commanded that the brothers should remove the bones on the anniversary of the

¹⁸⁹ Theodore, Penitential, HS III, I.xii.3, I.xiv.1, II.xii.1-4, pp.186, 187, 199.

¹⁹⁰ Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', p.148. On burial in general see D.A. Bullough, 'Burial, Community and Belief in the Early Medieval West', in Ideal and Reality, ed. P. Wormald et al., pp.177-201, esp. pp.185-92.

¹⁹¹ HE IV.11. Bede did not state why Sebbi wanted the bishop to be present although it was possible that he wanted to receive an episcopal blessing before he died. Sebbi was known for his religious devotion and Bede stated that he ought to have been a bishop rather than a king.

¹⁹² HE III.23.

¹⁹³ Bullough, 'Burial, Community and Belief', p.185.

burial but the body was found intact. On his death, Eadberht was buried in the sepulchre which had housed Cuthbert's body.¹⁹⁴

In contrast to the penitential of Theodore, a text of episcopal provenance, Bede did not restrict the hearing of individual confessions and the imposition of private penance to priests and bishops. Cuthbert heard confessions whilst a prior.¹⁹⁵ However, there is evidence to suggest that Bede's views concerning penitential procedure were not always consistent. In his early work on the Catholic Epistles he emphasised that confession should be made to priests (*presbyteri*). In a later commentary, *De Tabernaculo*, he wrote as if the formal reconciliation of a penitent was properly the reserve of a bishop.¹⁹⁶ This change may reflect his hope that more bishops would be consecrated under Egbert of York and therefore suggest that ideally he saw bishops as the key figures to whom confession should be made. In the sphere of pastoral care, Bede may have envisaged all the faithful undertaking some form of pastoral duty but only ordained clergy and especially bishops could fulfil all pastoral duties particularly those relating to the administration of the sacraments. This concern with bishops as both the foremost practitioners of pastoral care and the controllers of parochial workers is evident from the *Letter to Egbert* where Bede advocated that in order to restore ecclesiastical order in Northumbria more sees should be created and should be sited in existing well-endowed *monasteria*. The abbot or monks who

¹⁹⁴ *VCP* 39, 42, 43; *HE* IV.29-30.

¹⁹⁵ Theodore, *Penitential*, HS III, II.ii.15, p.192. This regulation prevents deacons from giving penance. *VCP* 9.

¹⁹⁶ Bede, *In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, pp.221-2; *De Tabernaculo*, p.115.

inhabited such *monasteria* should be given the right to choose someone from their own community to be ordained as a bishop. If no suitable candidate was available the monastery should be free to nominate its own choice of candidate from outside.¹⁹⁷ The emphasis is clear. Christianisation was dependent on bishops and without adequate numbers in episcopal orders the *gens Anglorum* would remain only semi-Christianised.¹⁹⁸

Bede lived in a world of pain. Illness and plague were common features of his environment. Bishop Tuda of Lindisfarne was killed by plague and it also attacked the monasteries of Barking and Lastingham where Chad was killed.¹⁹⁹ Although Bede firmly believed that the sick could be miraculously cured and a number of his miracle stories seem to be designed to prove the inadequacy of conventional medical practices in comparison with the divine power of healing²⁰⁰, he also highlighted the more mundane medical duties which devolved upon bishops. In his account of a series of miracles performed by John of Beverley, Bede illustrated how the bishop possessed medical knowledge. The daughter of Abbess Hereburh of Watton was afflicted by an illness and had been bled in the arm. John of Beverley, called to the scene to offer his blessing, conveyed to the abbess his own knowledge of blood-letting by stating that she had acted foolishly to bleed the girl when the

¹⁹⁷ Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.413-4.

¹⁹⁸ For further comment on Bede's views concerning the organisation of parochial ministry see Chapter six below.

¹⁹⁹ *HE* III.27; IV.3, 7-8.

²⁰⁰ *HE* IV.19, 32; *VCP* 30, 32, 45. See Chapter three below.

moon was waxing.²⁰¹ John's medical skill was however limited. Although he miraculously cured a dumb youth he handed the youth over to a physician so that his scabby head could be healed. Similarly having baptised Herebald after a riding accident he called a doctor and ordered him to set and bind up Herebald's fractured skull.²⁰² The episcopal see of Lindisfarne was known for possessing doctors but they were unable to heal a paralytic boy who was subsequently healed by St Cuthbert's shoes.²⁰³ Bishops continued to remain concerned with the practice of medicine in Anglo-Saxon England. In the eighth century Cyneheard, the bishop of Winchester, wrote to Bishop Lull of Mainz requesting that he might be sent some medical treatises.²⁰⁴

Bede made some reference to the nature of ecclesiastical life within episcopal sees. Episcopal communities were especially praised for their encouragement of learning and study. All members of episcopal *familiae* appear to have spent some part of their time in personal contemplative prayer. Aidan and his clergy daily engaged in occupying themselves with reading the scriptures or learning the psalms.²⁰⁵ During his youth at Lindisfarne Wilfrid had zealously learnt the psalms and was later to develop a knowledge of canon law as a result of his disputes with Northumbrian

²⁰¹ HE V.3.

²⁰² HE V.2, 6.

²⁰³ VCP 45.

²⁰⁴ Tangl no.114, pp.246-7; Theodore's Penitential also displayed medical knowledge when it suggested that the hare was good for dysentery and its gall could be mixed with pepper for the relief of pain, HS III, II.xi.5, p.198.

²⁰⁵ HE III.5.

kings and bishops. Acca his successor at Hexham built up a notable library collecting histories of the passions of the martyrs as well as other ecclesiastical books and was a very learned theologian. When requesting a commentary on Luke from Bede he quoted both Jerome and Augustine.²⁰⁶

The most notable cathedral school which Bede described was that which developed at Canterbury whilst Theodore was archbishop. Christ Church was a centre for teaching and a flood of students received instruction in the scriptures, metre, astronomy and ecclesiastical computation. A number of Theodore's pupils were to enter the ranks of the episcopate: Offfor who became bishop of the Hwicce, John of Beverley, and Tobias bishop of Rochester who was familiar with Latin, Greek and English. Aldhelm became bishop of Sherborne and provided further evidence of the curriculum at Canterbury and the nature of Theodore's teaching in a number of letters. The subjects he studied included Roman law, metrics and astrology.²⁰⁷ It is also known from elsewhere that Theodore's school differed from Wearmouth and Jarrow in the manner in which it expounded the Scriptures since it was marked by use of the factual and literal, Antiochene, style of exegesis in contrast to the main western allegorical tradition that looked back to Origen.²⁰⁸ Bede emphasised reading and study in his Letter to Egbert deploring the low standards of latinity among the

²⁰⁶ HE III.5; V.19-20; Bede, In Lucam, pp.5-6.

²⁰⁷ HE IV.2, 23; V.8, 18, 23; Ehwald, pp.475-8, 492-3; Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.94-9; M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', Anglo-Saxon England 15 (1986), pp.45-72. On the type of law studied by Aldhelm see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the early English Church: some questions of transmission', in his Early Medieval History (Oxford, 1975), pp.115-37 at pp.127-8.

²⁰⁸ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, p.97.

Northumbrian clergy and especially recommending that the bishop read works which were edifying to those who undertook episcopal office, Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus and Gregory the Great's Liber Regulae Pastoralis and homilies. He also exhorted Egbert to read the Acts of the Apostles to remind himself of the company which Paul and Barnabas kept and the diligence of their labours.²⁰⁹

Some of the bishops described by Bede were noted for their interest in chant and liturgical music. Putta, bishop of Rochester, was 'especially skilled in liturgical chanting after the Roman manner.' When his cathedral church was destroyed by Aethelred of Mercia in 676, he was granted a small church by Seaxwulf, bishop of the Mercians, where he made no attempt to establish a bishopric but continued to teach church music.²¹⁰ Other bishops were known for their patronage of musicians. When Paulinus moved to Rochester he left James the Deacon behind him in York who was known for his musical skill and ability to instruct many in singing after the manner of Rome. Acca who was himself a learned musician invited the musician Maban to Hexham where he restored the deteriorated music once known there. Wilfrid invited Aeddi to be a singing master in Northumbrian Churches. Both Maban and Aeddi had been trained at Canterbury which was known for developing its liturgical chanting in the manner practised at Rome during the pontificate of Gregory the Great. The Church of Canterbury thus spread Roman liturgical chant to the churches of various English kingdoms.²¹¹ The episcopal *familia* of the monastic see

²⁰⁹ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.406-8.

²¹⁰ HE IV.2, 12.

²¹¹ HE II.20; IV.2; V.20.

of Lindisfarne contained singers and engaged in nocturnal singing of the psalter.²¹²

Bede's monastic view of the place of the episcopate in the life of the Church led him to consider not merely the outward institutional form of its structure, personnel and role in the conversion of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms but also the personal, inner spiritual qualities of individual bishops belonging to the episcopal hierarchy. His examination of these qualities and the ideal of episcopal sanctity which he endorsed and promoted must be considered in some detail and therefore forms the subject of the next chapter.

²¹² VCP 16, 40, 45.

CHAPTER THREE.

BEDE AND EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY. THE BISHOP AS PASTOR, SOLITARY AND MIRACLE WORKER.

Having considered the manner in which Bede was concerned both to express the role of bishops in securing the conversion of the early Anglo-Saxon people and to discuss the circumstances surrounding the establishment and consolidation of an episcopal church in early Anglo-Saxon England, it is now necessary to turn to his exploration of the manner in which individual bishops came to personally define their prestige, power and authority. This involves an investigation of their continued attachment to ascetic traditions once they had been elevated to the ranks of the episcopate, and their ability to develop reputations as the workers of miracles.

Gerald Bonner has commented that 'the world of Bede is a monastic world, his culture a monastic culture, designed to bring men to heaven.'¹ In an attempt to emphasise the life of separation implicit in the monastic ideal some of the early monastic rules such as the Regula Magistri had displayed a marked hostility to priests and refused them admission to monastic life.² However, the Rule of Saint Benedict had discussed the possibility of priests becoming monks and devoted a chapter to the ordination of monks from within the community.³ Bede's world was heavily influenced by Benedictine ideals and he viewed all the clergy, and indeed all

¹ G. Bonner, 'Bede and Medieval Civilisation', Anglo-Saxon England 2 (1972), p.83.

² Regula Magistri 83, ed. A. de Vogüé, SC 106 (Paris, 1964), pp.342-47.

³ Regula Sancti Benedicti 60, 62, ed. A. de Vogüé and J. Neufville, SC 182 (Paris, 1971-72), pp.634-6, 640-2.

Christians, from a monastic perspective, injecting asceticism into the blood-stream of the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate. He presented bishops as ascetic giants. A bishop's authority depended not on his personal wealth, high birth or even his clerical office but ultimately upon his record of ascetic achievements, his probity and his abilities as a spiritual guide. Alan Thacker has commented that for Bede, 'the episcopal office was valued as the supreme means of exemplifying and mediating the monastic *conuersatio*.'⁴ The Historia Ecclesiastica therefore dwelt upon Aidan and Cuthbert as exemplary monk-bishops to whose pastoral, ascetic and spiritual ideals all should aspire.⁵ Bede was preoccupied with generating an image of episcopal sanctity which described how a bishop might simultaneously both know and love God and convert, teach and uphold the flock committed to his charge. In his writings he took up a particular position concerning the question of episcopal authority. He believed that in an episcopal career the active and contemplative lives, the life of the pastor and the life of the solitary, should be inextricably linked. His writings were therefore concerned to construct a skilful portrait of the manner in which the ideal bishop should be capable of drawing in upon himself for personal instruction and examination and yet also turning his attention outward to the attention of a wider public which had need of his gifts and abilities. This portrait, where ascetic power was placed within an episcopal context, was to serve as a paradigm to which the Anglo-Saxon Church should look in order to construct the entire Christian

⁴ A.T. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), p.153.

⁵ A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp.140-6.

community. Bede wanted the heights of perfection witnessed in the exemplary lives of bishops to be the goal of the Anglo-Saxon people.

The Bishop as Pastor and Solitary

Bede's monastic conception of episcopal authority can only be understood if it is placed within the context of his theological views concerning the nature of the Church as a whole since his conception of the Church influenced his conception of the personnel within it. Bede's world was a practical world, he was more of a teacher than a thinker.⁶ In formulating a concept of the Church he did not therefore systematically expound a clearly defined set of ecclesiological theories but rather offered a series of images of the Church as the meeting point between God and man.⁷ For Bede Christian identity was synonymous with being a member of the Church. The *ecclesia* was a community and the true Christian life took place *extra mundum*.⁸ The kingdom of God, solely accessible by means of divine grace, was composed of the *ecclesia electorum*, the invisible church of the truly faithful and sanctified. The Church was therefore not simply an idea or an institution but a

⁶ A.G. Holder, 'Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis', Anglican Theological Review 72 (1990), p.406; Bonner, 'Bede and Medieval Civilisation', p.78.

⁷ Y. Congar, L'ecclésiologie du haut moyen age (Paris, 1968); M.T.A. Carroll, The Venerable Bede, His Spiritual Teachings (Washington, 1946), ch.2; G.W. Olsen, 'From Bede to the Anglo-Saxon Presence in the Carolingian Empire', Settimane 32 (1986), pp.305-82.

⁸ Carroll, The Venerable Bede, His Spiritual Teachings, p.68; Bede, In Primam Partem Samuhelis Libri IIII, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, pp.61, 63; In Ezram et Neemiam, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, p.248; In Lucam, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, pp.37-8; In Genesim, ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A, p.186.

purified humanity united to Christ with all the elect.⁹ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill has noted that Bede's Church 'was at one and the same time a *signum*, a spiritual manifestation of God's business, and a *res*, a visible institution.'¹⁰ As Augustine had done before him, Bede contrasted the *civitas mundi* and *civitas diaboli* with the community of heaven.¹¹ The elect who comprised the Church lived a life of pilgrimage on earth since their true home lay in heaven.¹² Viewed from this perspective mankind's place in history was characterised by *permixtio*, he lived in the world and yet was conscious that the invisible kingdom of God lay beyond the visible Church.¹³

These ecclesiological ideas were not new nor were they intended to be. Bede was more concerned to synthesise, to teach and to disseminate knowledge than to speculate and innovate. He set himself the task of appropriating patristic exegesis to an Anglo-Saxon Church which needed to be drawn into the Christian mainstream.¹⁴ This concern led him to develop an elaborate series of allegories symbolising the church.¹⁵ In the four books which he composed on Genesis for Bishop Acca, Bede

⁹ Congar, *L'ecclésiologie*, p.92.

¹⁰ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede and Plummer', in Id., *Historical Commentary*, pp.xxvii-xxviii.

¹¹ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, p.262; *In Genesim*, pp.162, 157; R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970), ch.7.

¹² Bede, *De Templo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, p.147.

¹³ Bede, *In Ezra et Neemiam*, p.357.

¹⁴ Bonner, 'Bede and Medieval Civilisation', *passim*; R. Ray, 'What Do We Know About Bede's Commentaries?', *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 49 (1982), pp.5-20 at p.12.

¹⁵ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, p.237.

viewed Noah's ark as the Church filled with the community of God's elect.¹⁶ The waters which surrounded the ark he thus allegorically equated with the waters of baptism. In another instance, in expounding the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke, Bede interpreted the Samaritan as Christ and the inn to which the injured man was brought as the Church.¹⁷ Elsewhere in the commentary on Luke, he identified the early Church with Simon's fishing boat and in a highly elaborate allegorical exposition covering the construction of the Tabernacle perceived the Tabernacle as the Church carried by poles which signified its holy teachers, possessing four gold rings which signified the books of the four evangelists and four feet which were the four forms of Biblical exegesis: the historical, allegorical, tropological and anagogical.¹⁸

Mayr-Harting has commented that Bede's 'whole perspective in writing about this life was of one whose real loyalty and love, whose *dilectio*, was towards the eternal heavenly Jerusalem.'¹⁹ This view of the Church and the Christian life had an important influence in shaping Bede's conception of the nature and function of the episcopate. Since the Christian's true home lay outside the physical world in heaven the ideal bishop must reveal his longing to leave that world. A bishop who failed to engage in contemplation was therefore not truly a bishop at all. He was a man cut

¹⁶ Bede, *In Genesim*, pp.103-4.

¹⁷ Bede, *In Lucam*, p.224.

¹⁸ Bede, *In Lucam*, p.224; *De Tabernaculo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, pp.15-25.

¹⁹ H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St. Benedict and Social Class*, (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), p.1.

off from the God he was called to serve and consequently a man unable to impart Christian truth to his flock. In the words of Augustine, no man had 'a right to be so immersed in the active life as to neglect the contemplation of God.'²⁰

By undertaking the task of stressing that there could be exact correspondence between the demands of living a spiritual life of contemplation and involvement with the demands of an episcopal career, Bede was led into a world of contrasts. He laboured to find balance and reconciliation within this series of ideals. In order to understand why this was so, it is necessary to explore not only how ascetic power was transferred to the episcopate in Bede's works but also to examine the background which influenced Bede's thought on this issue. Each bishop explored in any depth by Bede appears like a Russian doll. He constructed each episcopal portrait from layer upon layer of Christian tradition. The texts which influenced Bede's thinking about the nature of asceticism and its relationship to the episcopate had brought a duality into Western monastic spirituality.²¹ Within these texts the nature of contemplation and the exercise of ascetic discipline were not marked by unified and homogeneous definition. For some writers, contemplation was conceived spatially. It was marked by the sociological separation of the redeemed from the unredeemed. This view perceived ascetics as a spiritual elite determined to eradicate the world, the flesh and the devil. Others rejected this spatial definition and put in its place a vision of the ascetic life which combined it with the lives of others in the world. For them the ascetic life involved community, the wheat grew up with the tares.

²⁰ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 19.19, ed. B.Dombart and A.Kalb, CCSL 49, p.686.

²¹ R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), p.160.

In his Conferences John Cassian had commented upon the early history of monasticism and the pursuit of the ascetic ideal.

those who kept the fervour of the apostles, recalling that former perfection, withdrew from their cities and from the society of those who thought this laxness of living permissible for themselves and for the Church, to spots on the edges of towns, or more remote places, and there practised privately and in their own groups the things which they remembered the apostles had instituted for the whole body of the Church.²²

This model of the ascetic life had been born in the fourth and fifth centuries in the Egyptian desert. It found expression in Athanasius' Vita Antonii, translated into Latin by Evagrius, and in Jerome's Vita Pauli.²³ Antony's life was one of pain and conflict marked by a series of withdrawals further and further into solitude. He battled relentlessly with demons, never washed, fasted and withdrew to a cave in an inner mountain to live a solitary life. He was perturbed by the paradox which came to affect all who sought to live a life of solitude, the fact that once he had withdrawn to the inner mountain he received many visitors and was called upon to provide help and counsel.²⁴ He felt like a fish out of water.²⁵ His career became a blueprint for the early church. The Vita Antonii created an image of the ascetic life based upon

²² Cassian, Conlationes, 18.5.2-3, ed M. Petschenig, CSEL 13, pp.510-11. 'hi autem quibus adhuc apostolicus inerat feruor, memores illius pristinae perfectionis, discedentes a civitatibus suis illorumque consortio, qui sibi vel ecclesiae dei remissionis vitae neglegentiam licitam esse credebant, in locis suburbanis ac secretioribus conmanere et ea, quae ab apostolis per universum corpus ecclesiae generaliter meminerant instituta.'

²³ Athanasius, Vita Antonii, Latin trans. by Evagrius, PL 73, cols. 125-70; English trans. R.C. Gregg, Athanasius, The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus (The Classics of Western Spirituality, New York and London, 1980); Jerome, Vita Pauli, PL 23, cols. 17-30.

²⁴ Athanasius, Vita Antonii, 82-4, trans. R.T.Gregg, pp.90-2.

²⁵ Ibid., 85, p.93.

the world of the desert. The metaphor of the desert became one means of defining and describing the ascetic life and the nature of contemplation. Desert monasticism bequeathed to the West a vision of the ascetic life which was concerned with separation in space. The monk fled from society and its demands. He renounced property, marriage, the family and the city. This flight was made extremely explicit in the writings of Salvian. In De gubernatione Dei Salvian had launched a vicious tirade against both the pagan world and a Church which had lost its purity. In so doing he created an ascetic elite where all true Christians were monks and declared that 'apart from a tiny handful who shun evil, what is the whole assembly of Christians but a cesspool of vice.'²⁶ For Salvian holiness was firmly located in the desert. All that lay beyond the values of the ascetic elite in the desert was unregenerate and impure.

Salvian's adoption of the eastern anchoritic ideal was not taken over elsewhere in the West in quite so stark a form. It was adapted in an attempt to combine monastic ideals with pastoral considerations. A further piece of ascetic literature which described the ascetic life in terms of a spatial withdrawal from the world was found in Gaul in Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini. Sulpicius created an enduring literary model.²⁷ Sulpicius portrayed Saint Martin as an ascetic involved in the

²⁶ Salvian, De gubernatione Dei, 3.9.44, ed. F. Pauly, CSEL 8, p.57; G.W. Olsen, 'Reform after the Pattern of the Primitive Church in the Thought of Salvian of Marseille', Catholic Historical Review 68 (1982), pp.1-12.

²⁷ P. Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian (Oxford, 1978), pp.143-65; C. Stancliffe, Saint Martin and his Hagiographer (Oxford, 1983); R. Van Dam, 'Images of Saint Martin in Late Roman and Early Merovingian Gaul', Viator 19 (1988), pp.1-27.

organisation of monastic communities. In this context Martin preserved and instructed an intimate group of disciples attracted by his charismatic power and authority.²⁸ However, he was also elected as bishop of Tours against his wishes and was actively involved in pastoral care, the official government of the church and confrontations with pagans. As a bishop Martin continued to live as a monk. However, his life was marked by the tensions between his monastic and episcopal callings. He would withdraw from his fellow clergy to an inner sanctum, a cell close by the cathedral church, where he would pray. When he could no longer endure the disturbance from his many visitors he withdrew further to a hermitage known as Marmoutier about two miles from his episcopal city.²⁹ He made journeys accompanied by monks rather than clerics and he wrought fewer miracles as a monk-bishop than as a monk.³⁰ In the writings of Sulpicius one can trace the beginnings of the tension which was to preoccupy Bede. Whilst Martin sought to withdrawal from the world, he was also conscious of his place within it, recognising that he had to serve public needs.

The ideal that pursuit of the ascetic life involved separation in space was also prevalent within the Irish Church. Through the work of its monastic evangelists, Ireland provided one channel by which this ideal could be transmitted to Anglo-Saxon England. Irish monks, heavily influenced by Egyptian monasticism, were noted for their pursuit of austerity and solitude. The monks of Saint Fintan of

²⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini* 6-7, 10, ed. J. Fontaine, SC 133 (Paris 1967-69), pp.264-69, 272-75.

²⁹ *Vita Martini* 10, SC 133, pp.272-5.

³⁰ *Vita Martini* 10-11, 13, SC 133, pp.272-77, 280-83; Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* II.4, ed. C. Halm, CSEL 1, pp.184-5.

Cloneenaugh were praised for living on nothing but herbs and water.³¹ The longing for *peregrinatio*, separation from one's homeland for religious motives, motivated many monks to travel in search of God.³² Columbanus had travelled extensively in Gaul where he exercised a powerful influence over the nature of monastic life, organising monastic foundations in Burgundy which received the patronage of the Gallic aristocracy. Columbanus sought to combine pastoral concern with a desire to separate from the world and seek a hermit's life of contemplation. He preached among the heathen Swabians but also wrote a monastic rule noted for its severity and frequently retired some miles away from his foundation at Annegray to live a solitary life in the hollow of a rock from which he had expelled a bear.³³ He would often spend more than fifty days in solitude.³⁴ Fursey undertook both pastoral and contemplative activities. His life was marked by a repeated pattern of pastoral work followed by the quest for solitude. Having previously retreated to an island, he emerged from solitude to preach in East Anglia before finally withdrawing to Gaul.³⁵ Irish monks were known for their retreat to islands. Island hermitages fulfilled the role of the desert as sanctuaries and places of retreat.

³¹ H. Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England 3rd edn. (London, 1991), p.82.

³² T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Social Background to Irish Peregrinatio', Celtica 11 (1976), pp.43-59; K. Hughes, 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Irish Pilgrimage', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 11 (1960), pp.143-5.

³³ Sancti Columbani Opera, ed. G.S.M. Walker, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae Vol. II (Dublin, 1957), pp.122-81; Jonas, Vita Columbani I.8., ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, pp.74-5.

³⁴ Vita Columbani I.8-12, 27, MGH SRM 4, pp.74-8, 101-104.

³⁵ Vita Fursei, ed B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, pp.434-40.

In reacting against what they perceived as a Church which had fallen away from a state of apostolic purity those who perceived the ascetic life through the image of the desert sought to create a spiritual elite separated from the rest of the Christian community. However, an alternative vision of the nature of the ascetic life had come into existence through the writings of Augustine. Augustine's vision of the Christian life was fundamentally social. He rejected the conception that the holy could be contained 'within the space of a sociologically defined milieu.'³⁶ Since earthly life was marked by the intertwining of the worldly and depraved with the holy, the true church did not exist on earth. Harmony in this world could not fully be found. In this context Augustine developed a vision of monastic spirituality which no longer perceived the life of the pastor and the life of the solitary as diametrical opposites. He fused the monastic and clerical lives.³⁷ As a bishop he lived a communal monastic life with his clergy in the bishop's house. Possidius' Vita Augustini emphasised that Augustine did not allow his affections to become fixed in property or the possessions of the church although he did occasionally relax from the contemplation of eternal things to turn to temporal affairs.³⁸ For Augustine the

³⁶ Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity, p.175. See further Id., Saeculum, passim; P. Brown, Augustine of Hippo (London, 1967), pp.136-45; A. Zumkeller, Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life, trans. E. Colledge (New York, 1986), p.154; J. Van Oort, Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities (Leiden, 1991).

³⁷ G.B. Ladner, The Idea of Reform (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), esp. pp.378-424; G. Lawless, Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule (Oxford, 1987); C.W. Brockwell, 'Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community: A Paradigm for his Doctrine of the Church', Augustinian Studies 8 (1977), pp.91-109.

³⁸ Possidius, Vita Augustini 24, ed. and trans. F.H. Hoare, The Western Fathers (London, 1954), p.223.

Christian life involved community not solitude. The place where the ascetic lived was unimportant, what mattered was that he lived with his brothers. Withdrawal to the desert to seek a life of solitude split the body of the faithful. It turned the communal living of the early apostles in Acts 4:32-7 into a travesty. The truly contemplative life could only be followed in heaven.³⁹

This social and communal form of asceticism also came to be espoused by Cassian. Cassian has often been regarded as a 'contemplative' writer. He has been presented as the instigator of a two-tier system which distinguished the regime of the hermit from that of the coenobite. This system was believed to have raised the contemplation of the hermit above the discipline of community life rendering inimical the 'calling to be simultaneously a pastor and a contemplative.'⁴⁰ However, the distinctions between the contemplative and active lives in Cassian's work are not that clear. When he began writing his Conferences, Cassian had accepted that the solitary life of the contemplative was superior to that of the coenobite living in community.⁴¹ In expounding the story of Martha and Mary he identified Mary's choice of the life of contemplation as a better path than Martha's decision to embark upon the active life.⁴² However, Cassian shifted his ground and his thought came to allow asceticism

³⁹ Ibid., 5, 22-25, 30, pp.198-9, 220-225, 232-242.

⁴⁰ C. Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in Saint Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200, ed. G. Bonner, C. Stancliffe and D. Rollason (Woodbridge, 1989), p.37; See further P. Rousseau, 'Cassian, contemplation and the coenobitic Life', Journal of Ecclesiastical History 26 (1975), pp.113-26.

⁴¹ Cassian, Conlationes Praef. I.4, p.4.

⁴² Ibid., I.8, pp.14-16.

to develop within the pastoral sphere. He rethought the nature of the contemplative life by subtly undermining the superiority accorded to solitude. In the nineteenth Conference, abbot John described his decision to return from solitude to community life. He explored the dangers of the desert explaining how the anchorite's ideal, although superior, could not be fully lived in this life.

its purity, of which I had some slight experience was sometimes soiled by the presence of anxiety about carnal matters, it seemed better to return to the coenobium to secure a readier attainment of an easier aim undertaken, and less danger from venturing on the higher life of the humble solitary.⁴³

The life of solitude was stated to lie beyond the power of normal virtue and in contrast ascetic standards were to be formed by the group as a whole. In the sixteenth Conference Cassian defined the relationship between the ascetic and his fellow devotees. The emphasis was unashamedly communal. A link was forged between ascetic authority and life in the ascetic community where men were to submit to their fellows.⁴⁴ Cassian therefore came to make room for the active and contemplative lives in communal monasticism. He came to identify contemplation not with the flight into solitude but with a state of mind, the study and understanding of Scripture. This redefinition of the nature of contemplation meant that it could be pursued within the context of a community making the monastic ideal open to

⁴³ Ibid., 19.3.2, p.536. 'sed quia degustata eius puritas sollicitudine interdum carnalium rerum interpolata sordebat, recurrere ad coenobium commodius uisum est, ut et promptior adrepti propositi planioris consummatio consequeretur et minus de praesumptae sublimioris professionis humilitate periculum.'

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.6, pp.442-5.

bishops and priests.⁴⁵

By making the monastic life more accessible to the Christian community as a whole, Cassian's views were to exercise a profound influence upon the Gallic Church. Bishops, notably those who had been trained in the community of Lérins founded by Honoratus, came to adopt the values of the monastic life. Lérins supplied eight bishops for Arles between 420 and 600.⁴⁶ Hilary of Arles commented that Honoratus 'preserved monastic humility so completely in his priesthood that, even while enjoying the priesthood's rewards, he remained in every way a monk.'⁴⁷ He remained equally successful as an abbot and bishop, pursuing many functions such as observing fasts, visiting the sick and dispensing charity.⁴⁸ Caesarius of Arles was similarly praised for managing to integrate monastic and ascetic spirituality with the demands of an episcopal career. As bishop of Arles he continued to live like a monk by devoting himself to a life of prayer and scriptural study, eating austere, shunning comfortable clothing, caring for the sick and maintaining little in the way of property.⁴⁹

A similar ideal was explored by an African writer who became a priest in

⁴⁵ Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, pp.169-239; Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity, pp.181-211.

⁴⁶ F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich (Munich and Vienna, 1965), pp.47-87.

⁴⁷ Hilary of Arles, Sermo de Vita Sancti Honorati, 16, ed. S. Cavallin (Lund, 1952), p.60.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 17-18, 28, pp.61-62, 69.

⁴⁹ Vita Caesarii I.11, 15-16, 20, 37; II.42, MGH SRM 3, pp.461-464, 471, 498. For further discussion of Caesarius of Arles see W.E. Klingshirn, Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul (Cambridge, 1994).

Gaul, Julianus Pomerius.⁵⁰ In his work De Vita Contemplativa an unknown bishop also called Julianus addressed a number of questions to Pomerius concerning the extent to which someone undertaking pastoral responsibilities in the church may engage in the contemplative life. The text defined the difference between the active and contemplative lives thus.

it pertains to the active life to advance in the midst of human affairs and to restrain the rebellious movements of the body by the rule of reason; to the contemplative, to ascend above things human by the desire of perfection and constantly to devote oneself to the increase of virtues. The active life is the journeying: the contemplative is the summit. The former makes a man holy; the latter makes him perfect.⁵¹

Although the Christian could only begin to approach the contemplative life on earth, Julianus claimed that holy priests could pursue it. He stated four meanings given to the contemplative life: knowledge of the future and hidden things; freedom from the occupations of the world; the study of scripture and the vision of God. His conclusion was that bishops could possess both freedom from the occupations of the world and the study of scripture although the other two elements would elude them.⁵² In recognising that the active life was not an alternative to the life of contemplation but rather an essential component of it, Julianus effectively turned his

⁵⁰ On Pomerius' career as a priest see P. Riché, Education and Culture in the Barbarian West Sixth Through Eighth Centuries, trans. J.J. Contreni (Columbia, South Carolina, 1976), p.32.

⁵¹ Julianus Pomerius, De Vita Contemplativa, I.12, PL 59, cols.427-8. 'Ad activam vitam pertinet inter humana proficere, et rebelles corporis motus rationis imperio temperare; ad contemplativam supra humana desiderio perfectionis ascendere, et indesinenter augendis virtutibus incubare. Habet activa profectum, contemplativa fastigium. Haec facit hominem sanctum, illa perfectum.'

⁵² Ibid., I.13, cols.429-30.

treatise into a manual for the episcopate.

Gregory the Great developed the teaching on the nature of the active and contemplative lives which had been espoused by Augustine.⁵³ His adoption of Augustinian ecclesiology pulled him away from coenobitic self-scrutiny. He therefore further rejected the stark contrast found in the image of the desert and stressed the need for interconnection between the two lives. Gregory maintained that the active life of service to a neighbour served to broaden the soul and in so doing raised the soul to a greater height in its knowledge of God.⁵⁴ Shortly after his election to the papacy, Gregory wrote a spiritual and practical guide for clerics, the Liber Regulae Pastoralis. In this text he taught the necessity for *rectores* to balance this dual relationship between the active and contemplative lives.

Let the ruler be near each one in compassion, and lifted above everyone in contemplation, so that he may both transfer to himself the weakness of the other through the inner depths of his mercy, and also transcend himself seeking the invisible through the highness of his contemplation, lest in seeking the heights, he despise the weakness of his neighbour, or in meeting the weakness of his neighbours, he lose desire for the sublime.⁵⁵

All Christians had a duty to take care of their family in the Church and to use the gifts given to them by God to benefit others but it was especially the duty of rulers

⁵³ C. Butler, Western Mysticism (London, 1922), pp.195-241; C. Dagens, Saint Grégoire le Grand. Culture et expérience chrétiennes (Paris, 1977), pp.135-63; J. Fontaine, 'Un fondateur de l'Europe: Grégoire le Grand (590-604)', Helmantica 34 (1983), pp.171-89.

⁵⁴ Gregory the Great, Homiliae In Ezechielem, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142, pp.235-36.

⁵⁵ Gregory the Great, Liber Regulae Pastoralis, 2.5, PL, 77, col.32. 'Sit rector singulis compassione proximus, prae cunctis contemplatione suspensus, ut et per pietatis viscera in se infirmitatem caeterorum transferat, et per speculationis altitudinem semetipsam quoque invisibilia appetendo transcendat, ne aut alta petens proximorum infirma despiciat, aut infirmis proximorum congruens, appetere alta derelinquat.'

to live up to their rank, surpassing others in virtue.⁵⁶ A preacher was a physician, a healer of souls who should carefully ponder what he should say, to whom he should say it, and when and in what manner he should speak.⁵⁷ Ascent to the heights of the contemplative life, which cannot be perfected in this life, was by means of the steps of the active life and hence a union of the two lives should be the chief aim of the preacher.⁵⁸

Bede inherited these traditions concerning the active and contemplative lives and discussed the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate in the context of them. In a homily influenced by the teaching of Gregory and Augustine he had taught how one was able to rise from active perfection to the contemplative life. The apostles Peter and John were not merely exemplary models of the active and contemplative lives respectively but had both achieved perfection in both spheres.⁵⁹ Elsewhere although looking to the writings of Augustine and Gregory which espoused a social form of asceticism, Bede did not turn his back upon the image of the desert. His discussion of episcopal authority is marked by the attempt to come to terms with the tensions between these two models of pursuing the contemplative and pastoral ideals.

Bede's fullest exploration of the place of the active and contemplative lives

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.3, col.28; 2.5, cols. 32-33.

⁵⁷ Gregory the Great, Homiliae in Ezechielem, pp.152, 174, 183-4; Moralia in Job 1.20.28, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143, p.40.

⁵⁸ Gregory the Great, Moralia In Job 31.51.102, CCSL 143B, pp.1620-1; 6.37.56-61, CCSL 143, pp.325-31; 28.13,33, CCSL 143B, pp.1420-1; 31.25.49, CCSL 143B, pp.1584-5; 30.2.8, CCSL 143B, pp.1495-6; Homiliae in Ezechielem, pp.229-30.

⁵⁹ Bede, Opera Homiletica I.9, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, pp.64-65.

in the context of an episcopal career is found in his consideration of St Cuthbert.⁶⁰ In his writings concerning Cuthbert, Bede drew upon the anonymous first Life of the saint commissioned by Bishop Eadfrith and the community of Lindisfarne and written between 699 and 705.⁶¹ This text, clearly related to the translation of Cuthbert's body in 698 and composed in the years immediately following it, focussed upon Cuthbert's personal charismatic appeal as a miracle worker. It stressed that Cuthbert's authority was fundamentally related to his abilities to prophesy and work restorative cures. Although the text portrays Cuthbert as an exemplary pastor, its main emphasis is upon his spatial withdrawal into contemplation. His pastoral activities only served to provide a context for the author's treatment of his miracles. The third book of the Life is primarily concerned with Cuthbert's life as a hermit. It opens with Cuthbert as prior at Melrose. From Melrose 'he fled from worldly glory and sailed away privately and secretly.'⁶² His decision to leave Melrose was shown to be his own and on his arrival at Lindisfarne he immediately fled into solitude. His period as prior at Lindisfarne is passed over with the minimum of comment since after the author first showed Cuthbert moving in the direction of Farne he chose to concentrate upon his seclusion on the island.⁶³ This meant that despite the fact that the author himself was a Lindisfarne monk, Lindisfarne featured little in his Life since it functioned as an active centre of pastoral activity. The

⁶⁰ Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary', *passim*.

⁶¹ VCA I.1.

⁶² VCA III.1.

⁶³ Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary', p.32.

author's primary focus on miracles and prophecies meant that his work was intended more to provide a literary advertisement for the incipient cult of Cuthbert than to serve as a manual for the ideal bishop. The work is little concerned with how asceticism can be applied to the episcopate and in general displays a rather negative view of episcopal office. The author showed that Cuthbert willingly resigned from undertaking episcopal duties he had only taken up under compulsion.⁶⁴ Episcopal office was marked only by the burdens of the world. The anonymous Life thus primarily fitted Cuthbert into the desert model of ascetic living. It located Cuthbert's holiness in a place, the seclusion of the Inner Farne, and in his acts of fasting and bodily self-denial where he would pray in solitude at night time waist-deep in cold water.⁶⁵

The anonymous Life's ideal of sanctity therefore owed more to the Irish, Egyptian and Martinian traditions than to those which emphasised the social balance of the active and contemplative lives. The Life was strongly marked by the influence of the literature associated with the Martinian cult. This is evident not only from its content but also from its form. It was written in four books in a similar manner to the metrical Life of St Martin by Venantius Fortunatus and the Liber de virtutibus Sancti Martini Episcopi by Gregory of Tours.⁶⁶ The anonymous author quoted extensively from Sulpicius Severus' writings and took the idea of composing two

⁶⁴ VCA IV.11.

⁶⁵ VCA II.1, 3.

⁶⁶ A.T. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D.1200, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), p.111. A further parallel is with the Dialogues of Gregory the Great.

prefaces to his work from the Vita Martini.⁶⁷ The text also portrayed many of Cuthbert's miracles in a manner closely associated with the Martinian model. Cuthbert, like Martin possessed the ability to deflect flames from a house by prayer.⁶⁸ The account of Cuthbert's cure of a young boy dying of plague similarly bears a strong resemblance to Sulpicius' account of a resurrection miracle performed by Martin.⁶⁹ Cuthbert the bishop, like Martin, remained a monk and anchorite at heart in his dress and bearing.⁷⁰ His conquest over demons and dislike of spectators also fit him into the Martinian model.⁷¹ There is also a clear parallel between Martin's periodic attachment to his desert-like retreat at Marmoutier and Cuthbert's withdrawal on Farne.⁷²

Martinian ideals were very popular in Ireland⁷³ and the anonymous Life is an indication of how far late seventh-century Lindisfarne was still marked by Irish influence. Since Iona was the mother church of Lindisfarne the anonymous Life

⁶⁷ VCA I.2; IV.1; J.-M. Picard, 'Structural Patterns in early Hiberno-Latin Hagiography', Peritia 4 (1985), p.75.

⁶⁸ VCA II.7; Sulpicius Severus, Vita Martini 14, SC 133, pp.282-85.

⁶⁹ VCA IV.6; Sulpicius Severus, Dialogi II.4, CSEL 1, pp.184-5.

⁷⁰ VCA IV.1; Vita Martini 10, SC 133, pp.272-5.

⁷¹ VCA II.6; IV.5; Vita Martini 7-8, 22, SC 133, pp.266-71, 300-3.

⁷² VCA IV.1, 9, 11; Vita Martini 10, SC 133, pp.272-75.

⁷³ Adomnán, Vita Columbae III.12, ed. A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson, (Rev. edn. Oxford, 1991), pp.198-201.

displayed close links with Adomnán's Life of Columba.⁷⁴ Both texts cited from the 'Gallican' version of the Psalter, displayed a concentration on miracles and shared the use of similar unusual vocabulary.⁷⁵ Cuthbert, like St Columba, possessed prophetic powers. He was endowed with the ability to miraculously perceive the fortunes of kings.⁷⁶ Both saints moved in royal circles and co-operated with secular powers. Furthermore both possessed a strong affinity with animals and the natural world.⁷⁷ There are also however, clear differences between the two texts which are an indication of how Lindisfarne had begun to loosen its ties with Ireland after the synod of Whitby had turned the Northumbrian Church in the direction of Rome. Adomnán's Life is more loosely structured than the anonymous Life and lacks a chronological framework. Furthermore although the anonymous Life is more concerned with Cuthbert as a contemplative than as a pastor it contains more discussion of pastoral activity, influenced by the Martinian prototype, than the Life of Columba. Although Columba on one occasion retired to an island near Iona for three days without eating or drinking, Adomnán's Life is less marked by the concern to describe the saint's withdrawal into solitude than the anonymous Life.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary', pp.22-3; D.A. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnán and the Achievement of Iona', Scottish Historical Review 43 (1964), pp.110-130, 44 (1965) pp.17-33.

⁷⁵ Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnán and the Achievement of Iona', Scottish Historical Review 43 (1964), p.130.

⁷⁶ VCA IV.8; Vita Columbae I.7-15, 43, 49, pp.30-41, 76-81, 88-91.

⁷⁷ VCA II.3, 5; III.5; Vita Columbae II.19, 21, 26-9; III.23, pp.118-121, 122-23, 130-37, 216-35.

⁷⁸ Vita Columbae III.18, pp.208-9.

The anonymous monk's concern to stress Cuthbert's pursuit of solitude was also influenced by the cults and hagiography which had developed in monastic circles in Gaul under the influence of Irish *peregrini*. The Vita Columbani composed by Jonas of Bobbio sometime after 639 and before 643 was closely linked with Iona and Lindisfarne. Jonas was strongly influenced by Sulpicius Severus' Martinian writings and had given prominence to two themes also evident in Sulpicius' Dialogues, the saint's friendship with animals and the provision of food.⁷⁹ Columbanus would periodically leave his monks and seek solitude by fasting in a cave and in the wilderness.⁸⁰ His life was also much marked by visions particularly concerning the fate of kings.⁸¹ The author of the Vita Amandi was influenced by the same hagiographical models as the anonymous. The Vita Amandi concentrated upon the harsh austerities endured by the traveller and missionary. Amandus had lived for a while in a cell by Bourges cathedral and like Cuthbert renounced his episcopal office before his death.⁸² Knowledge about Amandus' activities could have reached Lindisfarne through the missionary activity of Willibrord. Willibrord had been given Amandus' church at Antwerp and Amandus appears among the original entries in The Calendar of Saint Willibrord along with Cuthbert and Aethelwold, Cuthbert's

⁷⁹ Sulpicius Severus, Dialogi I.13-14, II.9, CSEL 1, pp.164-67, 190-91; VCA I.6; II.3, 5; III.5; Vita Columbani I.7-8, 15, 17, 22, 27, MGH SRM 4, pp.73-75, 80-1, 83-5, 95-7, 101-4.

⁸⁰ Vita Columbani I.8-9, 12, 17, 27, MGH SRM 4, pp.74-5, 78, 83-5, 101-4.

⁸¹ Vita Columbani I.18-22, 24, 27-29, MGH SRM 4, pp.86-97, 98-99, 101-8.

⁸² Vita Amandi I.5, 8, 13, 16, 18-20, 22, 26, MGH, SRM 5, pp.433-434, 436, 439-440, 442-445, 449.

successor on Farne.⁸³

Bede remodelled the anonymous Life in three texts: two Vitae, one in verse and the other in prose, and the Historia Ecclesiastica. The earliest of these works was the metrical Life of Cuthbert begun at the request of Bede's own brethren around 705 at the beginning of the reign of Osred whom the poem hails as a new Josiah.⁸⁴ Bede claimed that he had been cured of a disorder of the tongue by means of Cuthbert's prayers and in the metrical Life he therefore chiefly sought to up-date the collection of miracle stories associated with Cuthbert.⁸⁵ He stated in the preface that he intended to write another work on the saint and it has been stressed that from the beginning of its composition he intended it to act as the metrical part of a twinned composition, an *opus geminatum* where one part was in prose, the other in verse.⁸⁶ However, the preface was only added later during the final drafting of the poem and it is likely that Bede originally intended the work to be paired with the Lindisfarne Life.⁸⁷ The text primarily concerns itself less with biographical details of the saint's life than with his moral qualities and sense of divine mission. Like the anonymous Life it was influenced by the literature associated with the Martinian cult, particularly the fifth- and sixth- century Vitae of Martin composed in verse by Paulinus of

⁸³ The Calendar of Saint Willibrord from MS Paris Lat. 10837, ed. H.A Wilson, Henry Bradshaw Society 55 (London, 1918), fols. 35-36, pp.4-16, 21, 24, 27.

⁸⁴ M. Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical Vita S. Cuthberti', in St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D.1200, pp.77-93; VCM 21, p.100, ll.582-85.

⁸⁵ VCM Prologue, p.57.

⁸⁶ P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *opus geminatum* from Aldhelm to Alcuin', Medium Aevum 50 (1982), pp.215-29.

⁸⁷ Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical Vita S. Cuthberti', pp.83-85.

Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus as counterparts to Sulpicius Severus' prose works.⁸⁸ Bede's use of these Martinian writings rather than those of Sulpicius Severus was significant. In these writings the image of St Martin as a bishop was a more dominant feature than the image of Martin as a monk which had been the most prominent feature of Sulpicius Severus' texts.⁸⁹ Bede chose to present Cuthbert according to a Martinian model which was more concerned with his role as a bishop than the anonymous Life. He thus utilised Martinian writings which were more episcopal in tone. In describing the pressure placed upon Cuthbert to accept episcopal office, Bede used a similar phrase to one found in Paulinus of Périgueux's text.⁹⁰ In recounting Cuthbert's mysterious visitor at Ripon, Bede stated that the saint henceforth often had converse with angels, a detail absent from the anonymous Life but evident within the Martinian writings.⁹¹

It is, however, in his two further presentations of Cuthbert rather than in the metrical Life that Bede took up the question of the tension between the active and contemplative lives in the context of an episcopal career. Bede's prose Life is set apart from the works which preceded it. It included further additional material as a result of conversations with Herefrith, the abbot of Lindisfarne at the time of

⁸⁸ Paulinus of Périgueux, De Vita S. Martini, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 16, pp.17-159; Venantius Fortunatus, Vita S. Martini, MGH AA 4.1, pp.293-370.

⁸⁹ Van Dam, 'Images of St Martin', pp.5-12.

⁹⁰ VCM 21, p.98, l.587; Paulinus of Périgueux, De Vita S. Martini II, p.35, l.21.

⁹¹ VCM 7, p.74; Sulpicius Severus, Vita Martini 21, SC 133, pp.298-301; Paulinus of Périgueux, De Vita S. Martini, III, pp.68-9, ll.144-51; Venantius Fortunatus, Vita S. Martini II, p.318, l.122; III, p.343, ll. 409-13.

Cuthbert's death in 687, and thereby belonged to a period when the cult of St Cuthbert was being vigorously promoted. In it Bede shaped and reworked existing material concerning Cuthbert in order to portray him as an exemplary figure who successfully combined the life of a pastor and teacher with the contemplative ideal.⁹² Cuthbert was presented as 'a romanised product of the Celtic discipline'⁹³ partly by means of a death-bed speech stressing his concern for the need for unity and warning the monks of Lindisfarne not to place themselves 'under the yoke of schismatics.'⁹⁴ The dominant ascetic traditions evident in the anonymous Life are evident in Bede's portrayal but are supplemented by a concern to utilise texts which had emphasised the social and communal aspects of asceticism.

In the prose Life Cuthbert was presented in a less Martinian form than he had appeared in the anonymous Life. Although Bede sympathised with Martinian ideals he shifted the emphasis of earlier portraits by sharpening the saint's affinity with the ascetic ideals of Gregory the Great, Augustine and Cassian. The Life was not marked by the anonymous' negative phraseology about pastoral care and episcopacy. Cuthbert as an enclosed contemplative never ceased to teach other people.⁹⁵ Succeeding Boisil as prior at Melrose he made extensive missionary and pastoral journeys into the surrounding countryside.⁹⁶ Bede's description of Cuthbert's

⁹² Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp.134-42.

⁹³ Wallace-Hadrill, Historical Commentary, p.170.

⁹⁴ VCP 39.

⁹⁵ VCP 22.

⁹⁶ VCP 9.

departure from Melrose in the Life portrays the saint in the Augustinian tradition, placing the needs of the church above his own call to contemplation. The initiative for Cuthbert's departure from Melrose rested not with the saint himself but with Eata, abbot of Lindisfarne, who transferred Cuthbert to the island for the purpose of teaching the brethren.⁹⁷

The Life also contained far more material concerning Cuthbert's role as a monastic reformer at Lindisfarne where he consistently supervised the brethren and shared in the manual labour.⁹⁸ As a contemplative, Cuthbert pursued the hermit's solitude as the highest achievement of the monk. However, he entered his hermitage with the consent of the brethren and remained in consistent close contact with the community. He also acknowledged that the coenobitic life was an admirable and sufficient route to holiness.⁹⁹ This portrait was heavily influenced by the treatment of the themes of teaching, preaching and asceticism found in Gregory the Great's depiction of Benedict in the Dialogues.¹⁰⁰ Finally as a bishop Cuthbert fulfilled all the necessary duties, visiting the villages of his diocese, preaching and confirming. He ministered to an area stricken by plague.¹⁰¹ For Bede therefore Cuthbert's sanctity owed more to his personal holiness than to his attachment to a place. The bishop's holiness was focussed on his own interior acts of contemplation. Vigilance

⁹⁷ VCP 16; Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary', pp.32-3.

⁹⁸ VCP 16.

⁹⁹ VCP 17-22.

¹⁰⁰ Gregory the Great, Dialogues II, ed. A. de Vogüé, SC 260, (Paris, 1979), pp.126-248; Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p.135.

¹⁰¹ VCP 26-35.

in prayer, reading the scriptures and following the monastic office equipped him to fulfil his role. This is further emphasised in the portrait of Cuthbert in the Historia Ecclesiastica which Bede intended to be read in conjunction with his earlier writings on the saint. The text offered a selection of key incidents from Cuthbert's life emphasising how he successfully fulfilled the role of pastor and solitary.¹⁰²

Although Bede's fullest exploration of the issue of the active and contemplative lives in relation to episcopal authority was evident in the images which he created of Cuthbert, he also explored the theme in recounting the careers of other bishops. Aidan's life was similarly marked by a concern to combine abstinence, fasting and contemplative study with preaching and almsgiving.¹⁰³ This description of his activities as a bishop is very similar to the portrait found in the Vita Caesarii outlining the career of Caesarius of Arles. Furthermore Caesarius, like Aidan, had left an island monastery, Lérins, to pursue a career as a bishop and preacher.¹⁰⁴ All the clergy who accompanied Aidan engaged in some form of study either reading the scriptures or learning the psalms.¹⁰⁵ Like Cuthbert, he too would retire from his episcopal see on Lindisfarne to Farne island to pray in solitude and silence emerging from seclusion to preach.¹⁰⁶ His asceticism was also shown to lie primarily in acts of bodily renunciation. Although respected by secular society he moved awkwardly

¹⁰² HE IV.27-32.

¹⁰³ HE III.5, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Vita Caesarii I.7, 13-14, MGH SRM 3, pp.459-62.

¹⁰⁵ HE III.5.

¹⁰⁶ HE III.16-17.

within it hurrying away from Oswald's table to read or pray. He gave away his horse to a beggar and retained few possessions.¹⁰⁷ Eadberht who ruled the church of Lindisfarne as bishop at the time of Cuthbert's translation sought to follow Cuthbert's example. His devotion to the study of the scriptures and works of charity was similarly stressed. During Lent he retreated to solitary places for prayer and even when the monks came to inform him of their discovery of the incorrupted body of Cuthbert he remained in his retreat.¹⁰⁸ Chad held his episcopal seat at Lichfield but like St Martin built himself a more retired dwelling-place in which to retreat for prayer and study with a few of his companions.¹⁰⁹ Also like Martin he was not shown undertaking absolute solitude.¹¹⁰ As bishop of Hexham, John of Beverley similarly retreated to an oratory separated from the church at Hexham by the river Tyne.¹¹¹

When Bede focussed upon bishops who possessed some form of connection with Celtic traditions, a strong sense of eclecticism characterised his portraits. It is evident that despite a concern to locate the sanctity and authority of these bishops in their attachment to an ideal of the Christian life influenced by Augustine and Gregory the Great which was pastoral and social, Bede retained a conception of episcopal sanctity which emphasised the bishop's attachment to solitude and withdrawal from

¹⁰⁷ HE III.5, 15.

¹⁰⁸ HE IV.29-30; VCP 40, 42.

¹⁰⁹ HE IV.3.

¹¹⁰ Sulpicius Severus, Vita Martini 10, SC 133, pp.272-75; Stancliffe, St Martin, p.24.

¹¹¹ HE V.2.

the crowd. The matter of defining the nature of holiness and applying ascetic ideals to episcopal sanctity which Bede inherited therefore remained somewhat ambivalent in his presentation of the lives of these bishops. The frontiers between the image of the desert and the image of the communal Christian life remained blurred and uncertain. The presence of such tensions and contradictions in Bede's work render him comparable to Cassian. Both Bede and Cassian formulated concepts of ascetic authority which catered for the coenobite but also remained attached to eremitic values. It is however, possible to fit Bede's descriptions of the early archbishops of Canterbury more firmly into a single model of the active and contemplative lives. Theodore, like Augustine of Hippo, did not build an oratory in order to separate himself spatially from his brethren but pursued a life of scholarship and scriptural study amongst them.¹¹² Bede thus fitted the early archbishops of Canterbury, educated in a Roman and Gregorian tradition, into the model of the ideal Christian life which was social rather than solitary.

Bede and Episcopal Authority. The Question of Audience.

It is now necessary to consider the audience for whom Bede's images of episcopal sanctity and of the episcopal structure of the Church were intended. With some texts the question of audience is comparatively straight forward. Due to its literary form the metrical Life of Cuthbert was chiefly intended for an elite and restricted audience. It was dedicated to John, a friend and colleague of Bede and designed to console him on a long journey. It served to promote the cult of Cuthbert

¹¹² HE IV.1-2.

in Bede's own monastery. An index to a further function which it performed is provided through another text, Alcuin's prose Life of Willibrord. In the preface to this work Alcuin discussed the intended audience of his *opus geminatum*.

I have complied with your orders, holy father, and have set out two small books, the one paced in common prose which may be read openly to the brethren in the church, if it seems worthy in your judgement, the other running in poetic feet, which ought to be reflected upon in a private room amongst only your grammarians.¹¹³

Thus, like Alcuin's metrical Life, the text was primarily an educational tool directed to a monastic audience. It was a private document designed to be ruminated on in the privacy of one's own room.¹¹⁴ It served as an edifying model of versification and a means of teaching Latin vocabulary and style. Written to provide a meditation on the existing anonymous Life of Cuthbert, the work may almost be considered as Bede's own means of convincing himself of Cuthbert's sanctity and holiness before he embarked upon presenting Cuthbert as an ideal pastor and bishop to a wider audience.

The commentaries would similarly be available only to a limited audience of scholars since Bede included within them discussions of textual criticism and scriptural translation with fairly complex accounts of variant readings. Judith McClure has noted that the sophistication of much of Bede's language in the commentary on Genesis with its lengthy excerpts from Augustine and lack of an

¹¹³ Alcuin, Vita S. Willibrordi, ed. W. Levison, MGH SRM 7, p.113. '...tuis parui, pater sancte, praeceptis et duos digessi libellos, unum prosaico sermone gradientem, qui publice fratribus in ecclesia, si dignum tuae videatur sapientiae, legi potuisset; alterum Pierio pede currentem, qui in secreto cubili inter scolasticos tuos tantummodo ruminari debuisset.'

¹¹⁴ Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical Vita S. Cuthberti', p.93.

orderly division of content meant that it would only have been of value to an experienced teacher or advanced student.¹¹⁵ However, although the commentaries presupposed an erudite audience, they operated on a series of different levels. Bede described the purpose of his commentary on Genesis to be the provision of a guide for the *rudis lector*¹¹⁶. Thus whilst for some the commentary served merely as a starting point for their own exegetical studies, for other weaker students its intention was to provide a basic commentary which taught some of the essentials of the faith. Bede hoped that the notes he provided would equip the clergy with the basic teaching necessary for them to give when called upon to discuss the concepts of creation, the fall and the promise of salvation.

The commentaries were marked by an underlying concern for the pastoral life of the Church and concerned to prepare bishops and priests for pastoral responsibility. The most direct audience for the commentaries was an episcopal one since many of them were commissioned by Acca in his capacity as bishop of Hexham. This in itself illustrates the importance which they attached to bishops as the trainers and educators of pastors. It also reveals the manner in which Bede was dependent upon episcopal patronage in producing many of his commentaries. Although Bede's commentaries were aimed at those working alone it is equally possible that they could have formed the basis for the vernacular instruction of monks and priests particularly in the hands of an educated bishop such as Acca. However,

¹¹⁵ J. McClure, 'Bede's Notes On Genesis And The Training Of The Anglo-Saxon Clergy', in Studies in Church History Subsidia 4, The Bible in the Medieval World, ed. K. Walsh and D. Wood (Oxford, 1985), p.26.

¹¹⁶ Bede, In Genesim, p.1.

their effectiveness in this sphere may have been limited. Bede had thought hard about the need for an educated pastorate to undertake the work of converting the *gens Anglorum* and consolidating their commitment to the Church. The construction of this educated elite, aware of the Latin exegetical tradition, was the main intention of his writings on a series of scriptural books and became a major preoccupation of all his later works. Bede wanted to create an elite clergy trained by the methods of Gregory the Great. He was aware of the limitations and shortcomings of the Anglo-Saxon clergy in understanding some of the central Christian doctrines and as a result had translated the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Gospel of John into the vernacular. However, he did not put together a sermon for an uneducated audience.¹¹⁷ The nearest he came to this was in the composition of his homilies which were written in a less abstruse style than the commentaries and, if they were glossed, could have formed the basis for vernacular preaching.¹¹⁸

It seems clear that the audience of the prose Life of Cuthbert remained primarily aristocratic and ecclesiastical. It was written for the bishop and brethren of Lindisfarne and the monks of Bede's own monastery. Although the background of the occupants of these communities is uncertain, it seems likely that the majority of their occupants were of high social standing. Cuthbert himself was most probably of

¹¹⁷ HE, p.583; Epistola ad Ecgbertum ed. C. Plummer I, p.409; McClure, 'Bede's Notes on Genesis', p.28.

¹¹⁸ Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', p.141; A.G.P. Van Der Walt, 'The Homiliary of the Venerable Bede and Early Medieval Preaching', (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1980).

military rank.¹¹⁹ The anonymous monk referred to a miracle, although he himself did not recount it, which was concerned with Cuthbert dwelling in a camp with an army. Similarly when Cuthbert was received as a monk at Melrose he gave up his horse and a spear.¹²⁰ Benedict Biscop, the founder of Bede's own monastery, had been a former *minister* of King Egfrith.¹²¹

The Historia Ecclesiastica was dedicated to Ceolwulf, king of the Northumbrians. It was clearly a text intended for a lay as well as an ecclesiastical audience.¹²² Ceolwulf was said to have wished to see the text more widely known both for his own instruction and for those over whom he had been appointed to rule. The width of this circle is unknown. However, it is clear that the work was dedicated to *auditores* as well as *lectores* and it may be considered Bede's most ambitious attempt to publicise his views concerning the role of the episcopate in the church.¹²³

In recording the achievements of ascetic pastors, the majority of whom belonged to the episcopate, Bede sought to provide a blueprint by which Anglo-Saxon society could be reformed by Christian ideals.¹²⁴ He saw the English as a chosen nation who had fallen away from God's purposes.¹²⁵ Bishops were the key figures

¹¹⁹ D.W. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), p.93.

¹²⁰ VCA I.7; VCP 6.

¹²¹ HA 1; Bede, Opera Homiletica, p.92.

¹²² HE Preface.

¹²³ HE V.13.

¹²⁴ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', *passim*.

¹²⁵ R.W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain (New York, 1966), pp.63-90.

who served to recall the lost golden age. This assumption had remained with Bede throughout his career since he had written commentaries primarily for Bishop Acca, composed the prose Life of Cuthbert at the bequest of Bishop Eadfrith and advocated that a bishop, Egbert, ought to take the primary role in reforming the parlous state of the Northumbrian Church beset by spurious and avaricious abbots and bishops themselves. The conversion of the English had been inaugurated by Gregory the Great, a monastic pope who had given priority to his pastoral responsibilities. It was continued and brought to fruition by a series of bishops who had combined monastic devotion with pastoral responsibility: Augustine, Aidan, Cedd, Chad, John of Beverley, Wilfrid and above all Cuthbert.

Bede was, however, not unaware of secular affairs nor of the importance of secular rulers. He directed his text to the lay world but it was a lay world which was closely related to and influenced by the ecclesiastical world. The secular rulers whom his text most admired fell into two categories. Firstly, there were those kings whose lives had been influenced by monastic ideals such as Oswine of Deira and Sigebert of East Anglia.¹²⁶ Sigebert resigned his kingly office to enter a monastery and was killed when he was dragged from the monastery to fight against the Mercians.¹²⁷ King Sebbi of the East Saxons was said to be consistently 'given to religious exercises, constant prayers, and the holy joys of almsgiving.'¹²⁸ Bede commented

¹²⁶ C. Stancliffe, 'Kings Who Opted Out', in Ideal and Reality, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp.154-76.

¹²⁷ HE III.18.

¹²⁸ HE IV.11.

that many people thought that as a result he should have been a bishop rather than a king. Thus episcopal values were shown to be a model by which elements of the secular aristocracy chose to live.¹²⁹ Secondly, Bede admired the warrior kings who had co-operated with bishops, protected the Church and extended its boundaries. Edwin was praised for his support of Paulinus. Oswald had brought Aidan from Iona to Lindisfarne and actively engaged with the bishop in the work of evangelisation by acting as an interpreter.¹³⁰ Egfrith however, although he had been instrumental in Cuthbert's consecration, brought disaster upon Northumbria by sending an army against the Picts against Cuthbert's advice.¹³¹ Despite the fact that Ceolwulf had been forced to abdicate and take the tonsure in 731, Bede invested hope in the king.¹³² In the Letter to Egbert he envisaged that Egbert would enlist the aid of Ceolwulf, described as a 'very ready helper', in ensuring that more bishops were consecrated.¹³³ There is evidence to suggest that Ceolwulf may well have been influenced by Bede's remarks. He helped to diffuse the cult of Cuthbert at Lindisfarne entering the monastery in 737. On his death in 764 he was buried near

¹²⁹ On the career of a saint as a means by which laymen might hope to achieve equal sanctity see C.F. Altman, 'Two types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saint's Lives', Medievalia et Humanistica N.S. 6 (1975), pp.4-8.

¹³⁰ HE III.3.

¹³¹ HE IV.26-7; VCP 24; VCA III.6.

¹³² HE, pp.572-3.

¹³³ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp.412-3.

the saint and he was said to have bequeathed a number of gifts to the church.¹³⁴

The evidence would suggest that the milieu within which Bede operated was aristocratic and monastic and that when he addressed a work to a lay audience he primarily directed it to a royal and aristocratic world. However, although Bede may have directed his depictions of episcopal authority to a cultural and social elite, it is still necessary to consider the extent to which his writings may have arisen from an interaction between 'elite' and 'popular' culture. One means of assessing this is by examining the place Bede granted to miracles in relation to episcopal power and the manner in which Bede's writings describe the devotees who sought the intercession of his holy bishops particularly those who wished to contact bishops in the hope of seeking a cure from an illness. By such an analysis it should be possible to explore whether ordinary believers were responsible for initiating developments in the cults of episcopal saints that were then appropriated by Bede or alternatively whether Bede himself initiated and controlled his material. Firstly the large amount of miracles associated with bishops will be examined before the issue of how these miracles related to the common people is discussed.

Bede, the Miraculous and Episcopal Authority.

Bede was a devout believer in miracles and a large amount of the source

¹³⁴ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols (RS London, 1882-5), Vol. 1, p.47; William of Malmesbury, De Gestis Regum Anglorum, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (RS London, 1887-9), Vol. 1, p.67; D.P. Kirby, 'King Ceolwulf of Northumbria and the Historia Ecclesiastica', Studia Celtica, 14-15 (1979-80), pp.168-9; E. Craster, 'The Patrimony of St Cuthbert', English Historical Review 59 (1954), p.185.

material for his hagiographical and historical writing consisted of miracle stories.¹³⁵ In the metrical Life of Cuthbert he claimed that a miracle had happened to himself when he was cured of a disorder of the tongue by singing Cuthbert's praises.¹³⁶ In an analysis of the miracles in late Merovingian saints Vitae, J.-L. Derouet made a distinction between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' or 'practical' miracles.¹³⁷ 'Vertical' miracles relate directly to the saint's individual relationship with God and include prophecies, visions, dreams and nature miracles whereby man was able to regain the paradisiacal state on earth. 'Vertical' miracles thus include miracles which show the saint to act in harmony with animals or to receive food under divine provision. 'Horizontal' miracles relate to the saint's relationship with others. These take the form of 'helping' miracles involving healing, exorcisms, the calming of storms, and the ability to control fires. They may also take the form of miracles involving punishment. In episcopal Lives such as Venantius Fortunatus' Life of Germanus, bishop of Paris, the 'horizontal' miracles tend to be most dominant whilst in Vitae concerned with ascetics, 'vertical' miracles appear in greater abundance. It is useful to apply Derouet's distinction to Bede's discussion of the miracles worked by early

¹³⁵ In general see B. Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in Bede: His Life, Times and Writings, ed. A. Hamilton-Thompson (Oxford, 1935), pp.201-229; C.G. Loomis, 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede', Speculum 21 (1946), pp.404-418; P. Cavill, '"Signs and Wonders" and the Venerable Bede', Evangelical Quarterly 60 (1988), pp.31-42; R. Gardner, 'Miracles of healing in Anglo-Celtic Northumbria as recorded by the Venerable Bede and his contemporaries: A reappraisal in the light of twentieth-century experience', British Medical Journal 287 (24-31 Dec, 1983), pp.1927-33.

¹³⁶ VCN Preface, p.57.

¹³⁷ J.-L. Derouet, 'Les possibilités d'interprétation sémiologique des textes hagiographiques', Revue d'histoire de l'église de France 62 (1976), pp.153-62.

Anglo-Saxon bishops because it may help to reveal those bishops whose miraculous powers were directly related to their pastoral role and those bishops whose ability to work miracles was more connected to their maintenance of an ascetic life.¹³⁸

Bede did not hesitate to associate wonders with monk-bishops involved in the work of conversion through preaching and teaching. This contrasts significantly with his attitude towards abbatial authority and the working of miracles. In the Historia Abbatum, Bede did not record any miracles which took place in relation to the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow. Although the anonymous Vita Ceolfridi had associated miracles with Ceolfrid after his death, Bede, in drawing upon this work to compose his own portrait of the monastic community, did not mention them.¹³⁹ In the Historia Ecclesiastica many of the miracles described are associated with bishops such as Aidan, Chad, Cuthbert and John of Beverley but are not shown to be essential to a genuine episcopate in every case. Furthermore, not every bishop described by Bede was blessed with miraculous powers and Bede's attitude towards the relationship between episcopal authority and the miraculous therefore needs to be explained.

Bede's account of John of Beverley's episcopate consists entirely of 'horizontal' healing miracles performed by the bishop. This reflects the nature of the source material which he used to describe John's activities derived from the abbot of Beverley, Berthun, but also appears to be marked by the conviction that miracles

¹³⁸ For an analysis of the miracle stories in Irish hagiography using Derouet's distinctions see C. Stancliffe, 'The Miracle Stories in seventh-century Irish Saints' Lives', in Le Septième Siècle. Changements et Continuités. The Seventh Century. Change and Continuity, ed. J. Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (London, 1992), pp.87-115.

¹³⁹ Anon, Vita Ceolfridi 40, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp.403-404.

were an essential element in John's episcopal power, authority and claim to other men's allegiance. It is significant that Bede showed that John's miracles took place publicly in response to requests for healing made to him by those who sought him out whilst he was performing specifically episcopal duties. Two of them occurred after he had been called by *gesiths* to dedicate churches and in one instance the water which had been used in the dedication of the church was able to cure a sick woman when it was given to her to drink.¹⁴⁰ On another occasion John was engaged in an act of episcopal visitation, visiting a *monasterium* of nuns at Watton where he was asked by the abbess to heal one of the nuns who was her daughter.¹⁴¹ As bishop of Hexham he also cured a dumb youth who came to visit him to receive alms and benefit from his charity.¹⁴² Abbot Herebald of Tynemouth's verdict concerning John of Beverley's life was that 'it was worthy of a bishop in every particular so far as it is lawful for a man to judge.'¹⁴³

By isolating John's miracles and linking them together in one section of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede was able to contrast them with miracles performed by other bishops. Chad's miracles were not central to his episcopal role. They were more related to his ascetic practices and of less immediate benefit to individuals. He

¹⁴⁰ *HE* V.4-5. Both these miracles came to be associated with the granting of estates to the church at Beverley see H.R. Loyn, 'Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh to the Tenth Century', *English Historical Review* 70 (1955), p.536; Wallace-Hadrill, *Historical Commentary*, pp.176-7.

¹⁴¹ *HE* V.3.

¹⁴² *HE* V.2.

¹⁴³ *HE* V.6.

was able to calm storms but did so whilst away from the public, praying or reading inside church. His role as a bishop was primarily concerned with preaching and he did not acquire a reputation for performing 'horizontal' healing miracles until after his death.¹⁴⁴ Thus he was only useful as a healer once dead rather than alive. His reputation for working cures came from the ability of the dust from his shrine to work miracles rather than his own personal involvement with individuals in an episcopal context.¹⁴⁵ Aidan's miracles were similarly not directly related to his role as a bishop. They took the form of a power over nature revealed in his ability to prophesy, to calm a storm and to deflect flames away from Bamburgh.¹⁴⁶ He prophesied and calmed a storm when a priest, Utta, came to him to seek prayer for a journey to fetch Eanflaed, daughter of Edwin, to be the wife of King Oswiu. He was also able to deflect flames from Bamburgh but performed this miracle in an ascetic context whilst praying in solitude on Farne Island. Mellitus was also able to perform a similar miracle by deflecting flames from Canterbury although unlike Aidan he performed the miracle in an episcopal context. The fire threatened to spread to the bishop's house and Mellitus was thus carried into the path of the fire itself in order to command the wind to deflect and eventually eradicate the flames.¹⁴⁷

As a central part of Cuthbert's *virtus* as a holy man, his miracles were not

¹⁴⁴ HE IV.3.

¹⁴⁵ On the distinction between miracles worked personally by the saint and those which were less personal and worked by relics see P. Brown, The Cult of the Saints (Chicago and London, 1981), pp.113-118.

¹⁴⁶ HE III.14-16.

¹⁴⁷ HE II.7.

confined to the period of his career as a bishop but were performed throughout his life. Prior to his elevation to the episcopate, Cuthbert's miracles were most commonly associated with his power to wield authority over nature and to prophesy. Some of these miracles were of a 'horizontal' nature such as the ability to calm storms and to deflect flames from a house.¹⁴⁸ However, given Cuthbert's reputation as an ascetic, the majority of his pre-episcopal miracles were of the 'vertical' type such as the ability to receive divine provision of food, to command birds and animals to serve him, to perceive the soul of Aidan being borne to heaven by angels and to prophesy concerning the death of King Egfrith and his own elevation to the episcopate.¹⁴⁹ Cuthbert's elevation to the episcopate brought about a change not only in the nature of his office but also in the nature of the miracles he performed. Since he remained an ascetic and a monk as a bishop, 'vertical' miracles were still associated with him. He predicted his own death to Hereberht the hermit when he had been invited to Carlisle to ordain some priests, gave water the flavour of wine and saw the soul of a man killed by a falling tree taken to heaven.¹⁵⁰ However, 'horizontal' miracles of healing came to be at the forefront of Cuthbert's miraculous power and were directly related to his authority as a bishop when Bede commented that, 'signs and miracles whereby he shone outwardly gave witness to the inward virtues of his mind.'¹⁵¹ Many of Cuthbert's healing miracles, like those of John of

¹⁴⁸ VCP 3, 14; VCM 3, 12.

¹⁴⁹ VCP 4-5, 7, 10-12, 20, 24; VCM 6-10, 18, 21.

¹⁵⁰ VCP 28, 34, 36; VCM 28, 30-1.

¹⁵¹ VCP 26.

Beverley, primarily took place in a public context whilst he was carrying out his episcopal duties of preaching and laying on hands. It was in the context of such activities that he cured the servant of a *gesith*, the wife of another *gesith*, a nun, a dying youth and a young boy.¹⁵² Further proof of Cuthbert's holiness as a bishop was provided by the posthumous cures which took place at his shrine or through his relics.

Bede therefore believed that episcopal saints and their relics were useful to think with as well as to believe in. Through the ability of bishops to work 'horizontal' healing miracles, he further defined the allocation of episcopal authority and influence within early Anglo-Saxon society. The requests for cures made to bishops by ailing individuals revealed their condition of weakness and dependence while the ability of bishops to perform healing represented their bestowal of assistance and aid. This process thereby both affirmed and created relationships of dominance and subordination. By communicating their power publicly in the face of onlookers through healing miracles bishops promoted and reinforced the dependence of communities upon their authority.¹⁵³ Tangible *beneficia* created networks of *clientela* and obligation verifying the Christian model of the universe.

Furthermore, some of the cures which bishops were able to provide took place through the medium of Christ's sacraments in the context of ceremonies of baptism and the laying on of hands. They thus possessed a liturgical value by

¹⁵² VCP 25, 29-30, 32-33; VCM 23-24, 26-27.

¹⁵³ See C. Lévi-Strauss, 'The Sorcerer and His Magic', in Structural Anthropology trans. C. Jacobson and B. Gundfest Schoepf (Garden City, N.Y., 1969), pp.161-80 at p.162.

presenting to people a process whereby healing was related to liturgical initiation or re-initiation into the community of the church. This focussed peoples belief on the rituals that constituted the Christian faith and united them around the bishop who presided over and controlled these rituals promoting adherence to the church's system of values and beliefs. John of Beverley used prayer to cure Herebald after the cleric had suffered from a riding accident having refused to heed the bishop's request that he refrain from riding. The healing was linked to a catechising process whereby the bishop asked Herebald if he had been baptised. Although Herebald had been baptised, John considered the baptism invalid because of the slow-witted nature of the priest who had performed it and subsequently rebaptised Herebald. Thus a healing miracle resulting in physical cure was combined with the spiritual healing of the cleric through exorcism and rebaptism. The reeve, Hildmer, was similarly cured in a liturgical context by receiving consecrated bread from St Cuthbert.¹⁵⁴ Bishops could also worked miracles at specific times in the church calendar. John of Beverley healed the dumb youth on the second Sunday in Lent.¹⁵⁵

As well as providing general teaching concerning the location of power in communities certain miracles could teach spiritual lessons specifically to the inmates of monastic and episcopal communities. Two 'horizontal' miracles of punishment found in the prose Life of Cuthbert were concerned with teaching monastic obedience. Cuthbert asked the monks of Lindisfarne to bring him some timber which he required for his hermitage. They forgot to do so and a piece of timber was

¹⁵⁴ HE V.6; VCP 31.

¹⁵⁵ HE V.2.

miraculously washed ashore. In a second case a group of monks were held up by a storm after failing to cook a goose at Cuthbert's orders. The anonymous Life had omitted this latter miracle and was less harsh to the monks in the former case.¹⁵⁶ Bede, however, under the influence of the Benedictine Rule and its principle of mutual obedience, used these miracles to convey a particular lesson.¹⁵⁷ By demonstrating his access to divine power a bishop was shown to act out and convey to others the role which was proclaimed for him as a mediator between God and man. Bede's insistence upon the efficacy of St Cuthbert's relics confirmed the authority of the saint. However, it also offered a challenge to other forms of authority expressed by the *medici* who were said to be present on Lindisfarne by presenting Cuthbert as an alternative 'doctor' who acquired 'patients'.

The physicians of Lindisfarne although they 'applied all the medical skill they possessed' were unable to heal a youth whose limbs were paralysed. Lying 'despaired of and deserted by the carnal physicians' the youth asked a servant to bring him some of the relics associated with St Cuthbert. Having consulted the abbot, the servant brought Cuthbert's shoes which were able to restore the paralytic to health by passing healing powers through the soles of his feet to his other limbs.¹⁵⁸ In another instance whilst he was preaching in the countryside, Cuthbert cured a nun of a pain in the head by anointing her with holy oil after she 'had been entirely given up by

¹⁵⁶ VCP 21, 36; VCA III.4.

¹⁵⁷ Mayr-Harting, The Venerable Bede, the Rule of Saint Benedict and Social Class, pp.8-9; Rollason, Saints and Relics, pp.85-86.

¹⁵⁸ VCP 45.

the physicians.¹⁵⁹ He also healed a dying youth of the plague 'which the careful hands of the doctors could not expel with their compounds and drugs.'¹⁶⁰ Since it was realised that health was available by appeal to a bishop and, after the bishop's death, by means of relics Cuthbert became an alternative patron around whom people could define their lives. Rather than submitting themselves to the healing abilities of doctors, people could find an alternative means of overcoming an illness by looking to the curative power of an episcopal saint and his relics. Bede highlighted the fame of Cuthbert's relics in the story of the cure of a demoniac boy. Firstly, a priest who had a reputation as an exorcist was sent to the boy but was unable to provide a cure. The boy was then brought to Lindisfarne by his father on a cart in the hope of receiving a cure through the relics of the martyrs held there, but the holy martyrs would not grant the cure sought in order to show what a high place Cuthbert held amongst them. The boy was finally cured by a particle of the earth gathered from the place where the monks had thrown the water in which Cuthbert's body had been washed.¹⁶¹

A further indication of the manner in which miracles could define episcopal authority and in so doing challenge the authority of others relates to Bede's account of a prophecy uttered by the bishop-saint Cedd in relation to Sigebert, king of the East Saxons. The authority wielded by the king was challenged because he had failed

¹⁵⁹ VCP 30.

¹⁶⁰ VCP 32.

¹⁶¹ VCP 41. This miracle is very similar to the story of the healing of a cleric through the power of Saint Benedict when the relics of other martyrs were unavailing found in Gregory the Great, Dialogues, 2.16, SC 260, pp.184-192.

to live up to Christian standards. He was murdered by his own kinsmen, one of whom had been excommunicated by the bishop for being unlawfully married. The bishop had ordered that nobody should enter the man's house or dine with him. King Sigebert had disobeyed this command and accepted an invitation to dine. The king was aware of his guilt and, as he met the bishop when coming away from the house, knelt at the feet of the saint in a gesture acknowledging his submission to the bishop's authority. The bishop promptly, in Bede's words, 'touched the prostrate king with his staff which he was holding in his hand and exercising his episcopal authority' uttered a prophecy foretelling the death of the king.¹⁶²

As archbishop of Canterbury, Augustine, like Bede himself, was shown to be fundamentally concerned with the propagation of correct doctrines and their acceptance. A healing miracle ascribed to Augustine by Bede therefore served the polemical purpose of proving the validity and orthodoxy of Augustine's episcopal power in relation to challengers of that power, the schismatical and unorthodox British bishops. At the meeting at Augustine's Oak, Augustine confronted the British bishops urging them to preserve Roman customs but they refused. Augustine then presented a blind man to the recalcitrant bishops but he could not be healed by them. However, when Augustine prayed the blind man's sight was restored.¹⁶³ This again reveals the manner in which interest in the ritual of healing overlapped with larger concerns concerning the nature of authority in the church. The vision experienced by Bishop Laurence was similarly used to teach a lesson about spiritual authority.

¹⁶² HE III.22.

¹⁶³ HE II.2.

Laurence was about to follow his fellow bishops Mellitus and Justus to the continent due to the slow progress of Christianisation. However, St Peter appeared to him in a dream and whipped him so that the next day he could show his wounds to the king. The dream reminded Laurence that because his authority derived from his position as a representative of the apostles he owed allegiance to St Peter and his see. Consequently he could not abandon his responsibilities.¹⁶⁴ Bede's miracle stories associated with bishops therefore served a number of purposes: they guaranteed the orthodoxy of a bishop and deflected criticism away from him, offered the prospect of cures to both laymen and clergy and informed bishops and others in the church of the nature of spiritual authority. Their inclusion in Bede's writings showed that the holiness of bishops and their relics provided Bede with a means of thinking about the relationship between personal holiness and episcopal power.

However, it must be remembered that Bede did not attribute miracles to all bishops. His account of Theodore is noticeable for its absence of miracles. This may, as Campbell has suggested¹⁶⁵, be a result of the sources to which Bede had access but it also relates to Bede's concern to stress Theodore's role as an administrator rather than a thaumaturge and is further related to his views concerning miracles as a whole. Bede defined Theodore's authority in relation to his ability to re-organise the diocesan structure of the church, appointing new bishops and dividing existing dioceses. Furthermore, Bede's views concerning the miraculous were largely derived

¹⁶⁴ HE II.6; B. Ward, 'Miracles and History: A Reconsideration of the Miracle Stories used by Bede', in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), p.74.

¹⁶⁵ J. Campbell, 'Bede II', in Essays in Anglo-Saxon History (London, 1986), pp.41-2.

from Gregory the Great. According to Gregory miracles definitely occurred. They were performed by saints as a sign of their sanctity but were not necessarily a condition of sanctity itself since they could be performed by both good and evil men.¹⁶⁶ In a letter to Augustine of Canterbury quoted by Bede in the Historia Ecclesiastica, Gregory had stressed that 'not all the elect work miracles' and elsewhere stated that the greatest miracles were miracles of conversion.¹⁶⁷ Although in the Dialogues, Gregory claimed that the holy men of Italy could work miracles he was concerned to present a distinction between external and internal virtues.¹⁶⁸ Physical miracles did not have any intrinsic value but were simply outward manifestations of the virtue that the saints possessed within.¹⁶⁹ Bede had also related the working of miracles to the inner *virtus* of the saint emphasising that 'in vain is a miracle shown outwardly if there is lacking the inward disposition.'¹⁷⁰ Miracles occur in greater numbers in the last three books of the Historia Ecclesiastica once Christianity had been shown to have established roots and the English Church had begun to develop. In the first two books the emphasis had been more on conversion

¹⁶⁶ Gregory the Great, Homiliae in Ezechielem, p.291; Homiliae in Evangelia 2.29.4, PL 76, col.1216; W.D. McCready, Signs of Sanctity. Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great (Toronto, 1989), pp.65-81; P. Meyvaert, 'Bede the Scholar', in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.51-55.

¹⁶⁷ HE I.31; Gregory the Great, Dialogues 3.17, SC 260, p.340; Homiliae in Evangelia 2.29.4, PL 76, cols. 1215-16; In Librum Primum Regum Expositionum, ed. P. Verbraken, CCSL 144, pp.492-493.

¹⁶⁸ Gregory the Great, Dialogues, 1.2, 3.25, SC 260, pp.24-35, 364-367.

¹⁶⁹ Gregory the Great, Dialogues, 1.12.6, SC 260, p.118; Homiliae in Ezechielem, p.292.

¹⁷⁰ Bede, In Marcum, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p.470.

carried out by teaching and preaching rather than by miraculous signs.¹⁷¹ Thus in following Gregory the Great, Bede thought that miracles, whilst important signs of God's intervention in the world, were not necessary to a genuine episcopate. An inner life of virtue was more important.

It is now necessary to consider whether the miracles worked by bishops in Bede's texts were concerned primarily with an elite or whether ordinary believers may have initiated innovations in the cults of episcopal saints which Bede appropriated and endorsed. It is clear that Bede's bishops were not isolated from communities but rather talked and interacted with a variety of people. In order to assert their authority they needed the support of their communities and to move within them. It was through such activity that they came into contact with the common people. There is evidence to suggest that Cuthbert was a popular saint before his cult had been actively promoted through the production of hagiographical works. Whilst on Farne, Cuthbert attracted a large number of followers who had heard reports of his miracles.¹⁷² These pilgrims left consoled and conscious of the saint's power. Cuthbert also performed two miracles on villagers. Whilst preaching in a scattered series of villages he helped a child recover from plague and resuscitated a youth.¹⁷³ Cuthbert continued to heal those of a lower social class after his death. The demoniac boy on the Lindisfarne estate who was cured by an infusion of the soil

¹⁷¹ J.T. Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles in the Ecclesiastical History', Traditio 31 (1975), pp.328-335.

¹⁷² VCP 22.

¹⁷³ VCP 32-33; VCM 26-27.

on which the water used to wash the saint's body had been poured was probably a church serf. Further miracles, although unspecified, were said to have taken place at the same spot.¹⁷⁴

In other instances, the beneficiaries of Cuthbert's prophetic and healing powers seem to have been restricted to ecclesiastics and kings. Aelfflaed, abbess of Coldingham and sister of King Egfrith, consulted him to ask how long her brother would live. He predicted Egfrith's death and the succession of Aldfrith.¹⁷⁵ He also cured Aelfflaed and one of her nuns with his own girdle. He exorcised the wife of Hildmer, a reeve of King Egfrith, and later cured Hildmer himself. He also cured his attendant on Farne whilst he himself was ill.¹⁷⁶ Most of the posthumous cures worked by Cuthbert were concerned with the healing of monks. The paralytic who came to Lindisfarne in the hope that the medical skill of the monks there would heal him and was finally healed by means of the shoes taken from the saint's body was a monk. The fact that no-one seems to have considered using anything associated with Cuthbert until all else had failed suggests that the miracle was performed in the early stages of the development of his cult.¹⁷⁷ Cuthbert also posthumously healed a guest-master, Baduthegn, a sick visitor from the clergy of Willibrord and a young monk who had an eye tumour.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ VCP 41; VCM 40.

¹⁷⁵ VCP 24; VCM 21.

¹⁷⁶ VCP 15, 23, 31, 37; VCM 13.

¹⁷⁷ HE IV.29; VCP 45.

¹⁷⁸ HE IV.31-2; VCP 44.

Bede depicted bishops alongside Cuthbert whose cults appear to have involved some contact with those outwith the ecclesiastical and lay elite. Their cults appear to have achieved an element of popular appeal through the power of relics associated with their name. Haedde, bishop of the West Saxons, acquired a posthumous reputation as a miracle worker. The spot where he died was considered a holy place and Bede recounted how men from the kingdom took soil from it and placed it in water. The soil was subsequently able to heal sick men and cattle.¹⁷⁹ A popular element also seems to have been evident in the cult of St Chad. A madman of unspecified social origins was healed at his tomb. The tomb contained an aperture through which those who visited it could obtain dust which could heal men and cattle.¹⁸⁰ Miraculous power was also associated with other episcopal relics. The horse-litter in which Bishop Eorcenwold of London used to be carried when ill was able to 'cure many people afflicted with fevers and other complaints.'¹⁸¹ Aidan had died leaning on the buttress of a church. This buttress could not be destroyed when the church itself was burnt by Penda of Mercia. When the church was rebuilt the buttress was placed inside where Bede commented that 'many are known to have obtained the grace of healing at this place.'¹⁸² John of Beverley personally healed a dumb youth who came to him to receive alms.¹⁸³ However, the further recipients

¹⁷⁹ HE V.18.

¹⁸⁰ HE IV.3.

¹⁸¹ HE IV.6.

¹⁸² HE III.17.

¹⁸³ HE V.2.

of John's healing powers were ecclesiastics or members of the upper levels of lay society. Abbess Hereburg of Watton asked John to cure her daughter of an arm infection. He also cured the wife of a *gesith* named Puch, the servant of a *gesith*, Addi, and a member of his own clergy, Herebald.¹⁸⁴

Bede seems to have recognised that episcopal cults developed due to the interaction between, rather than the manipulation of, social classes. Bishops were shown to possess contact with the ordinary members of lay society and the development of their cults owed some influence to popular devotional practices. Belief in miracles, relics and the power of saints seems to have transcended social distinctions and to have been effective among all types of people, kings and ordinary laymen alike. However, Bede seems to have been a little wary of this popular element and anxious to manage and control his material. This is evident from a story he related concerning the cult of St Cuthbert. Drawing upon material supplied to him orally by abbot Herefrith, Bede recounted Cuthbert's anxiety about his popular appeal. Herefrith attempted to persuade Cuthbert to be buried on Lindisfarne rather than on Farne. Cuthbert, aware of his growing status as a saint, wished to prevent his tomb from becoming a focus of popular interest.

it will be more expedient for you that I should remain here, on account of the influx of fugitives and guilty men of every sort, who will perhaps flee to my body because, unworthy as I am, reports about me as a servant of God have nevertheless gone forth; and you will be compelled very frequently to intercede with the powers of this world on behalf of such men, and so will be put to much trouble on account of the presence of my body.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ HE V.3-6.

¹⁸⁵ VCP 37.

Eventually, Cuthbert acquiesced and allowed his body to be taken to Lindisfarne but on the condition that it be entombed in the interior of the church so that the brethren could control access to the tomb. This story may in part be intended to convey the depth of Cuthbert's desire for solitude and his own personal humility, but it also reflects a lack of concern on the part of the ecclesiastical elite to invest the cult of saints with popular appeal.

It would appear that one of the key functions of miracles in Bede's writings lay in their ability to define and delineate the nature of episcopal authority in early Anglo-Saxon England. Bishops' claims to work 'horizontal' miracles of healing in particular show the central importance of how such claims related to their assertion of independence and authority in relation to other 'unorthodox' bishops, kings, clergy and laymen. However, the ability of some bishops to perform miracles operated in a more decentralised context when miracles were associated with relics rather than the bishops themselves or when they were performed outwith an explicitly episcopal role in an ascetic context. Bede recorded miracles which occurred within the limits of his understanding of the world. Although possessing theological significance by acting as signs which pointed to the reality of divine intervention in the world, miracles could also possess a persuasive, practical significance. The ability of bishops to work them consolidated and confirmed both Bede's concerns with the early Anglo-Saxon Church as an episcopal institution and the bishops' own power.

Bede and Episcopal Authority. Concluding Remarks.

In conclusion, therefore, Bede's writings are paradoxical. On the one hand

they drew upon the influence of Gregory the Great, espousing a concept of pastoral authority which dispensed with an organised hierarchical pastorate and replaced it with *sancti praedicatores, rectores* and *doctores ecclesiae*.¹⁸⁶ However, despite Bede's concern to stress the existence of a priesthood of all believers¹⁸⁷ and his interest in the conversion of ordinary laymen he wrote primarily for an elite, for the evangelisers rather than the evangelised, and described a people who had been chiefly converted by those within the highest ranks of the Church. This paradox is to be explained through Bede's monastic background. Bede's world at Wearmouth and Jarrow, marked by Benedictine values, was a world of monastic classlessness.¹⁸⁸ Mayr-Harting has commented that 'the primary model of Bede's social thinking was a monastery.'¹⁸⁹ The monastery was intended to act as a reflection of the values of the heavenly city. The social thinking propounded by the Benedictine Rule was therefore directed to the obliteration of class distinctions within the monastery. There was to be no respect for persons, monks were forbidden to receive presents and no one was to be excused from kitchen service. Seniority in the monastery was based not on age, class and former wealth but on the time when a monk had entered the monastery.¹⁹⁰ These monastic social attitudes had found their clearest expression in

¹⁸⁶ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp.130-1; Id., 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', pp.152-3.

¹⁸⁷ Bede, *De Templo*, p.194.

¹⁸⁸ Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict and Social Class*, passim.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.17.

¹⁹⁰ *Regula Sancti Benedicti* 2, 35, 54, 63, SC 181-2, pp.440-452, 564-69, 616-19, 642-47.

Bede's Historia Abbatum. In his account of the abbatial succession, Bede showed Benedict Biscop contrasting election because of kinship with the criteria of the Benedictine Rule that election should be based upon personal wisdom and merit. Abbot Eosterwine, although a *gesith* of King Egfrith, took part in all the manual work; milking cows, winnowing and threshing.¹⁹¹

However, when Bede came to look beyond the world of reflective scholarship contained within his own monastery and to consider the Church at large his monastic classlessness was forced to confront the fact that the Church was compelled to adopt a hierarchical structure and absorb some of the characteristic features of aristocratic society. This had a two-fold effect. It resulted in his recognition of the place of the episcopal hierarchy within the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon *gens* whilst at the same time his attempt to emphasise the monastic qualities which bishops possessed. The fact that Bede was consciously longing for heaven accounts for the images of the episcopate which he created. He could not escape from the fact that he lived in a world where there were tensions between heavenly and earthly values and these tensions were apparent in his examination of the Anglo-Saxon episcopate. His bishops were caught between the tensions of carrying out their earthly duties; preaching and administering the sacraments, and contemplating their future in heaven. Bede directed his attention to their personal holiness showing that it was this that gave them their own ethos and sense of purpose. It also allowed them to interact with people articulating the means by which they came to terms with their inner selves and their role in communities. Bede self-consciously wrote about bishops to

¹⁹¹ HA 8, 11.

an elite of clerics and aristocratic laymen who were characterised by their access to Christian wisdom. His reason for this was two-fold. Firstly, he wanted the values embodied by the episcopate in the age of the conversion of the English Church to be adopted by the churchmen of his own day. Secondly, he recognised that it was only through such an earthly elite, both secular and ecclesiastical and their power to influence the community at large, that the Church among the *gens Anglorum* could begin to display the characteristics of the heavenly elite marked by the classlessness of the universal church 'where though there are Jews and barbarian peoples and Scythians, freemen and slaves, nobles and non-nobles, all are brothers in Christ and glory to have the same father in Heaven.'¹⁹²

¹⁹² Bede, *De Templo*, p.195. 'Diximus autem supra quod pauimenti aequalitas humilem concordiam designaret sanctae fraternitatis ubi cum sint Iudaei et gentis barbari et Scythae liberi et serui nobiles et ignobiles cuncti se in Christo esse fratres uniuersi eundem se habere patrem qui est in caelis gloriantur...'

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE BISHOP AS PERSECUTED APOSTLE AND LAWGIVER. EDDIUS STEPHANUS AND THE SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY OF BISHOP WILFRID.

Wilfrid the Northumbrian bishop and abbot, the subject of a hagiographical text composed by Eddius Stephanus or Stephen the priest, has commonly been perceived as a controversialist.¹ He is considered a polemical figure whose hagiographer portrayed him in a highly politicised light. This has meant that despite some discussion concerning the form of episcopal sanctity which Stephanus' text explored, the religious dimensions of its portrait of Wilfrid have been largely ignored. It is firstly necessary to clarify what is meant by the religious dimension of a work. A text may be said to possess a religious dimension when the themes which it explores are concerned with fundamental concepts of belief. These concepts motivate and possess the text's protagonist or protagonists to cling to convictions which undergird the ground of their being.² Ultimate loyalty and trust lie within these convictions. Allegiances to particular modes of behaviour occur, some of them strong others less deeply strong. Protagonists express the fact that they are governed by a sacred, numinous power. Certain basic awarenesses are part of their everyday existence. They adopt or rather are adopted by these concerns. The main intention of this

¹ The identification of the author of the *Vita Wilfridi* with the singing master Aeddi said to have been brought to Northumbria by Wilfrid in *HE* IV.2 and *VW* 14 has been disputed by D.P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', *English Historical Review* 98 (1983), pp.101-14.

² P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. R.C. Kimball (Oxford, 1959), pp.3-9; C. Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in Id., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London, 1975), pp.87-125.

chapter is therefore to consider Wilfrid's episcopal power and career in this context and to suggest that the model through which Stephanus interpreted Wilfrid's episcopal authority was one which emphasised his role both as a persecuted bishop and as a fatherly lawgiver.

The Theological Dimensions of the Vita Wilfridi

Like Bede, Stephanus wrote within a Northumbrian milieu and primarily from a monastic perspective. Wilfrid operates as a monastic bishop within the text. His elevation to the episcopate did not entail the loss of his monastic status although it did arguably alter the course of his life. The text depicts Wilfrid controlling a huge monastic empire and much of its content revolves around his anxiety to defend this empire in the face of actions from secular and ecclesiastical authorities which threatened to destroy it. The work is full of accounts of the anxieties and sufferings of Wilfrid and his followers. These followers, to whom Aldhelm wrote offering advice, appear to have been a mixture of monks, ordained clergy and noblemen and are often described as *sodales*, *monachi*, *subiecti*, *fratres* and *cleri*.³ The text is openly and self-consciously polemical. It is arguably far more directly a piece of propaganda than any of Bede's writings. Its concern with Wilfrid as the ruler of a supra-national monastic empire has led some to see Stephanus' principal motive for

³ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, MGH AA 15, pp.500-2. English translation in *Aldhelm The Prose Works*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge and M. Herren (Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979), pp.168-170; A.T. Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background to Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiography', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), pp.237-8. There is evidence to suggest that Aldhelm also maintained a federation of *monasteria* in Wiltshire at Malmesbury, Frome and Bradford once he had been ordained to the episcopate, BCS 114.

its composition to be to seek to defend and preserve the bonds of connection which existed between Wilfrid and his followers after the saint's death. Alan Thacker has stated that for Stephanus 'Wilfrid's episcopal activities were not of supreme importance' since his 'prime concern was with Wilfrid as the leader of a monastic *paruchia*.'⁴ David Rollason has also stressed that this theme lay at the centre of the text by indicating that the posthumous miracles ascribed to Wilfrid portray him as a defender of his monastic lands.⁵

Donald Bullough has emphasised the large amount of biographical detail in the Life and its lengthy largely chronological narrative framework. He was led to conclude that the Life marked a new and distinct departure for the genre of hagiography. Unlike texts such as the anonymous Life of Cuthbert or the Whitby Life of Gregory the Great it was characterised by an absorption in worldly matters and an indifference to the power of God as it is manifested in miracles.⁶ Such an assessment of the text highlights certain aspects of it since it does indeed only occasionally depict Wilfrid as a thaumaturge and contains a large amount of political detail. However, since the text has been perceived in this manner the way in which it depicted how Wilfrid's sanctity was manifested has been undermined. God has been largely removed from the world of Stephanus and Wilfrid and needs to be put back into it. Full accounts of Wilfrid's stormy ecclesiastical career have been written. Many of them drawing upon the biographical detail of Stephanus' text have adopted

⁴ Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background', p.250.

⁵ D.W. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), ch.5.

⁶ D. Bullough, 'Alcuino e la tradizione culturale insulare', Settimane 20 (1973), p.578.

a firmly historicist approach.⁷ They have focussed on the text as a source for writing reconstructions of events which happened. They attempt to correlate the accounts of Bede and Stephanus so as to construct an accurate account of Wilfrid's career and thereby do not view texts as documents in themselves, like a mirror to be looked into, but rather as windows to be looked through to where an objective life of Wilfrid can be written.

It is necessary to examine the text from another perspective, an internal perspective, so as to attempt to enter the community in which Stephanus worked and operated. It is only here that one is able to fully understand some of the central messages which Stephanus was attempting to convey through the text. The text emerged from a community sharing a particular set of values. Stephanus was articulating the voice of the crowd. This community had ascribed sanctity to Wilfrid because they believed that through his words and deeds he had been gradually filled and transfigured with the presence of God. Stephanus intended his text to act as a spiritual and liturgical document which located its protagonist in a providential framework. This does not mean that Wilfrid's historicity is denied, it means that for Stephanus the question of Wilfrid's historicity was subordinated to goals other than the mere recording of historical facts for their own sake. If Stephanus may be proclaimed a historian, he was first and foremost a Christian historian. The practice

⁷ Saint Wilfrid at Hexham, ed. D.P. Kirby (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1974); E. John, 'The social and political problems of the early English church', Agricultural History Review 18 (1970), Supplement: Land, Church and People: Essays Presented to H.P.R. Finberg, ed. J. Thirsk, pp.39-63; P. Wormald in The Anglo-Saxons, ed. J. Campbell (Oxford, 1982), pp.82-3; W. Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid', in Id., The Narrators of Barbarian History (Princeton, 1988), pp.235-328; C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c.600-c.800', Northern History 25 (1989), pp.18-38.

of the Christian historian is fundamentally different from that of the historian who is unmotivated by an underlying belief in the Christian faith.⁸ History and faith are intertwined for the Christian historian. It is impossible to separate the one from the other. Early Christian historians concentrated upon history less as the construction of an impersonal series of facts and more as a means of communicating how they remembered and evaluated their Christian experience. Stephanus, like Bede, was therefore concerned to write *Heilsgeschichte*, the history of salvation. He was concerned to illustrate how this salvation had come to the Anglo-Saxon people through God but was mediated to them through his agent, a turbulent bishop.

Stephanus, like Bede, cannot claim to provide us with a picture of what actually took place in the life of Wilfrid since the past was only available to him as a reconstituted present which was determined by the selectivity of his own concerns. It is therefore necessary to focus primarily on how Stephanus conceived Wilfrid as a type and a sign, revealing the relationship between the heavenly and earthly worlds. For Stephanus, Wilfrid was a means to make Christian truth accessible to the world in which he belonged. He was to serve as a living Bible. As Aron Gurevich has observed, 'there was a tendency deeply inherent in medieval popular perception to translate the spiritual into the concretely sensible and material.'⁹

Commonly Bede and Stephanus have been shown to be polarised. Bede's

⁸ There is a vast literature on this subject see H. Butterfield, Christianity and History (London, 1949); R. Niebuhr, Faith and History: a comparison of Christian and modern views of history (London, 1949); God, History and Historians: modern Christian views of history, ed. C. Thomas McIntire (New York, 1977); C. Brown, History and Faith (Leicester, 1988).

⁹ A. Gurevich, Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception, trans. J.M. Bak and P.A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), p.194.

attitude to Wilfrid has been conceived as lukewarm if not actively hostile.¹⁰ Differences undoubtedly existed between the manner in which these authors conceived the nature of episcopal authority. Bede's scholarship extended far wider than Stephanus'. He wrote of the episcopate in a number of differing contexts. He also wrote of a number of different bishops. Stephanus although clearly highly acquainted with scripture has unlike Bede left no surviving commentaries. He is known only through a single text which was itself not widely disseminated in manuscript form. However, this does not mean that Stephanus' intellectual credentials were not high. He bequeathed to early Anglo-Saxon England 'the nearest thing to a history of the English Church until Bede'¹¹ and his text influenced Bede's composition of his own portrait of Wilfrid. However, Bede's works became vastly more influential and popular than Stephanus' text. Stephanus bequeathed his image of Wilfrid to few later writers. His text was refashioned and reshaped by the tenth-century Frankish scholar Frithegod and by Eadmer after the Norman Conquest. Frithegod, a member of the community at Christ Church Canterbury, wrote a metrical Life of Wilfrid as a result of the alleged transfer of Wilfrid's relics from Ripon to Canterbury under Archbishop Oda.¹² Eadmer composed a Life of Wilfrid

¹⁰ Goffart, Narrators, pp.235-328; D. Whitelock, 'Bede and his Teachers and Friends', in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.31-4; F.M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1971), p.145; M. Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York', Speculum 18 (1973), pp.213-46.

¹¹ Goffart, Narrators, p.281.

¹² Frithegodi monachi Breviloquium Vitae beati Wilfridi, ed. A. Campbell (Zurich, 1950); M. Lapidge, 'A Frankish scholar in tenth-century England: Frithegod of Canterbury/Fredegaud of Brioude', Anglo-Saxon England 17 (1988), pp.45-65; N.P. Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester, 1984), pp.227-31.

and perhaps further inspired by Stephanus' example may have decided to compose a Life of another turbulent bishop, Anselm, as a result.¹³ Wilfrid was not to become a prominently venerated saint. The relative unpopularity of Wilfrid's cult compared with that of Cuthbert has often been seen as a consequence of Wilfrid's stormy career. Yet this in itself is odd. It is odd because Wilfrid's role and life were perceived by Stephanus in terms of an idea of sanctity which had shaped and moulded some of the most fundamental figures of the Christian faith. This was an idea of sanctity based upon the saint facing secular persecution and suffering.

Examination of Wilfrid's expulsion and his disputes with the Northumbrian kings and bishops has focussed on a number of elements. Attention has been focussed upon the manner in which Wilfrid resented the division of his diocese into three sees carried out by King Egfrith and Archbishop Theodore in 678.¹⁴ Theodore appointed Bosa to serve the kingdom of Deira with his see at York; Eata to serve Bernicia and to be based at Hexham and Eadhaed to serve Lindsey. Eadhaed's rule in Lindsey soon ended with King Aethelred's reconquest of the province for Mercia and he was then placed over Ripon.¹⁵ Wilfrid's appeals to Rome have also been explained in terms of his opposition to the means by which the new bishops were chosen for the sees carved out of his former monastic empire. It has been argued that Wilfrid's

¹³ Vita Wilfridi auctore Eadmero, ed. J. Raine, The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops, 3 vols. (RS, London, 1879), vol. 1, pp.161-226; Breviloquium Vitae Sancti Wilfridi (Auctore Eadmero?), Ibid., pp.227-237. On Eadmer and Anselm see R.W. Southern, Saint Anselm and His Biographer (Cambridge, 1962).

¹⁴ H. Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England, 3rd edn. (London, 1990), ch.9.

¹⁵ VW 24; HE IV.12.

annoyance concerning the division of his diocese arose from the fact that the bishops placed in the new sees were not from any of his own monasteries.¹⁶ In his letter to Egbert in 734, Bede had recommended the creation of a number of smaller dioceses for the Northumbrian kingdom but had significantly stressed that the new bishops should be chosen from the monastic foundations which were to form the new sees.¹⁷ The fact that this principle had been ignored in Wilfrid's case underlay Stephanus' presentation of Wilfrid's appeal to Pope Agatho where Wilfrid was shown offering to accept the diminution of his diocese provided that the fresh bishops were from his own clergy.¹⁸ Wilfrid's conflicts have also been explained in terms of his involvement with Egfrith's wife, Aethelthryth, which resulted in Aethelthryth undertaking to devote herself to the religious life through a vow of chastity and thereby refusing to consummate her marriage with Egfrith.¹⁹ Although after the death of King Egfrith, Wilfrid was restored to his see and his monasteries at Ripon and Hexham were returned to him by King Aldfrith, enmity was again soon stirred up. Wilfrid was expelled by Aldfrith for a number of reasons. He was said to have been opposed to Aldfrith's attempts to despoil Ripon of its possessions and convert it into a bishopric and to have objected to Aldfrith's adherence to the decrees made

¹⁶ Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops"', pp.21-4.

¹⁷ Bede, *Epistola ad Egbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol I, p.413.

¹⁸ *VW* 30.

¹⁹ W.T. Foley, 'Imitatio Apostoli: St Wilfrid of York and the Andrew Script', *American Benedictine Review* 40 (1989), pp.13-31.

during the middle period of Archbishop Theodore's pontificate.²⁰ These decrees were probably those which had created the new bishops for Wilfrid's dismembered see when he was first displaced.

However, it is necessary to consider Wilfrid's quarrels and disputes in a different context, not in terms of Stephanus' concern to describe the intricacies of Northumbrian ecclesiastical politics, but in terms of Stephanus' theological convictions.²¹ The presence of dispute and dissension in Stephanus' portrayal of Wilfrid is largely absent from Bede's discussion of the saint. This may be explained by the fact that Bede and Stephanus possessed differing views concerning the manner in which episcopal sanctity should be portrayed, exercised and related to Christian devotion and experience. The images of the episcopate created by Bede have been shown to be primarily concerned with bishops who adopted ascetic practices and retained a strong monastic outlook. These images owed much to the ideals of sanctity located in desert monasticism and the Celtic tradition although Bede also looked to Gregorian and Roman ideas.²² Cuthbert's episcopal sanctity was not acquired by means of suffering earthly persecution like Wilfrid but instead it was characterised

²⁰ VW 45; HE V.19.

²¹ During the course of composing this chapter, it came to my attention that an American scholar, William Trent Foley, had similarly come to the conclusion that the theological dimensions of Stephanus' Vita needed further consideration. His study may be found in W.T. Foley, Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus' Life of Bishop Wilfrid, An Early English Saint's Life (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1992) to which I owe much. However, my emphasis differs from Foley's at a number of points, see my review in Albion 25 (1993), pp.281-2.

²² A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp.130-53. See also Chapter three above.

by suffering in the physical, natural sphere. This is evident from both the anonymous Life of Cuthbert and Bede's writings which cover Cuthbert's life. To understand why this difference between the episcopal sanctity of Cuthbert and Wilfrid existed, one must consider the texts which influenced the structure of Stephanus' Life and the theological ideas which it embodied. It is necessary to begin with the Christian text itself, the Bible.

Wilfrid as Persecuted Apostle

Stephanus' knowledge of the Bible was vast. The Bible was held over the life of Wilfrid as a means through which that life could be perceived and understood. There are over forty direct references to scripture in his work and almost as many indirect references. The background to Stephanus' use of these references which compare Wilfrid with prophets, apostles, kings and patriarchs is found not only in the fact that Stephanus belonged to a monastic milieu and would be accustomed to daily meditation and reflection upon the sacred page. Stephanus' Biblical knowledge can also be explained through his connections with Acca. Acca, bishop of Hexham and a chief patron of Stephanus' Life was also the chief patron of Bede's biblical commentaries. Acca began to receive commentaries from Bede around 709 when Bede sent him a commentary on Acts and 1 John.²³ These were followed by a

²³ Bede, Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractio, ed. M.L.W. Laistner, Medieval Academy of America Publication no. 35 (Cambridge, Mass., 1939). Also ed. D. Hurst, in CCSL 121. In Epistulas VII Catholicas, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121. For comment on these see B. Ward, The Venerable Bede (London, 1990), ch.3; M.T.A. Carroll, The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings (Washington, 1946). For dating see M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, A Hand-List of Bede Manuscripts (New York, 1943).

commentary on 1 Samuel composed around 716 and a commentary on Mark.²⁴ Further commentaries followed in the next two decades. The links between the chronology of Acca's reception of such commentaries and the dating of the Life of Wilfrid, believed to have been composed, or at least begun, in the decade 710-720, show, as Mayr-Harting noted, a clear connection between the two.²⁵ It thus seems clear that Stephanus would have been able to have gained access to Bede's commentaries and used them in the composition of his own work. Furthermore as a patron of Stephanus' text, Acca himself may have had a significant influence upon its content and concerns. He was noted as a close companion of Wilfrid. When Wilfrid fell ill at Meaux on his return from Rome, he narrated his vision of St Michael to Acca.²⁶

Although the links between Stephanus' extensive use of scripture and Acca's patronage of Bede's commentaries have been noted, the extent to which Stephanus was influenced by Bede's exegetical methods when composing his text has not been fully considered. Through his patronage of Bede's commentaries Acca was likely to have been the means by which Stephanus could have obtained a knowledge of Bede's exegetical methods. Bede had inherited an Origenist exegetical tradition which regarded as axiomatic the fact that every word of scripture was potentially capable

²⁴ In Primam Partem Samuhelis Libri IIII, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119; In Marci Evangelium Expositio, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120.

²⁵ Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity, p.140.

²⁶ VW 56.

of multiple levels of meaning.²⁷ In a prefatory letter to Acca attached to his commentary on 1 Samuel Bede had stressed the importance of a four fold means of interpreting scripture: the literal sense, the allegorical sense, the moral sense and the anagogical sense.²⁸ Similarly in a commentary on Luke he had written, 'he is dumb who does not understand that a spiritual meaning is present in the letters.'²⁹ Bede's commentaries provided Stephanus with an exegetical framework which he could use within the context of the construction of a hagiographical text. Gregory the Great had similarly linked exegetical methods with hagiography when he composed his Dialogues.³⁰ Bede's prevailing concern for discovering allegorical meaning in scripture thereby enabled Stephanus to conceive of his text as a text which possessed concealed layers of meaning and was intended to be read allegorically. It was a text which celebrated not merely the virtues of a powerful and wealthy bishop, but also the mysteries of the eternal world. Erickson has commented upon the character of perception possessed by medieval people in the following manner.

belief in a densely incorporeal population that could be glimpsed under

²⁷ Ward, The Venerable Bede, ch.3; G.H. Brown, Bede the Venerable (Boston, 1987), ch.3; R. Ray, 'What Do We Know About Bede's Commentaries?', Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale 49 (1982), pp.5-20; A.G. Holder, 'Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis', Anglican Theological Review 72 (1990), pp.399-411; C. Jenkins, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian', in Bede: His Life, Times and Writings, ed. A. Hamilton-Thompson (Oxford, 1935), pp.152-200; R.E. McNally, The Bible in the Early Middle Ages (Westminster, Maryland, 1959).

²⁸ Bede, In Primam Partem Samuhelis, pp.9-10.

²⁹ Bede, In Lucam, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p.29.

³⁰ W. Bolton, 'The Supra-Historical Sense in the Dialogues of Gregory the Great', Aevum 33 (1959), pp.206-13; P. Cusack, An Interpretation of the Second Dialogue of Gregory the Great: Hagiography and Saint Benedict (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1993).

special conditions affected the quality of their visual perception. Their sight was different from ours in kind; accepting a more inclusive concept of reality, they saw more than we do.³¹

Stephanus' Life therefore sought to operate within a thought world where men looked beyond the everyday world as the only reality.

Stephanus was able to make his use of allegory operate both simply or in a more subtle manner. A 'simple' allegorical reading of the life would approach the text in a similar manner to any other hagiographical work. It would see the hero ultimately as a type of Christ. However, Stephanus was also aware that the allegorical exegetical method could be extended much further when applied to his text. One example of his use of the method is offered by the descriptions of Wilfrid's church building programmes. At Hexham and Ripon Wilfrid built and decorated churches.³² At Ripon the people shared in the work of decorating the church with a purple and gold altar cloth. At Hexham, Wilfrid constructed a church which Stephanus boasted was built on such a scale that 'we' had not heard of any house north of the Alps to rival it. At York, Wilfrid did not build a church but restored one. The church built by Paulinus was said to have fallen into disrepair and the windows were unglazed. Wilfrid put glass in the windows, lead on the roof and increased the church's estates.³³ These building programmes may be read as simple narrative accounts of Wilfrid's activities but a deeper layer of meaning lies behind them which Stephanus intended to convey. One finds this meaning if one turns to

³¹ C. Erickson, The Medieval Vision (Oxford, 1976), p.29.

³² VW 17, 22.

³³ VW 16.

Bede's commentaries particularly De Templo, De Tabernaculo and In Ezram et Neemiam.³⁴ In these commentaries Bede provided lengthy descriptions of the building of churches and sacred objects. De Templo stressed how the building of the temple related to the building of a people of God.³⁵ Significantly in Stephanus' Life the account of the construction of the church at Ripon showed how the people participated with Wilfrid in constructing the church. Stephanus thus intended to show, like Bede, how the two elements were connected. The reconstruction of York after the brief episcopate of the Celtic bishop Chad symbolised the restoration of Roman orthodoxy as it had manifested itself under Paulinus. It illustrates how Stephanus, through his acquaintance with the allegorical interpretative method, could explore the theme of Wilfrid as a staunch upholder of Roman canonical tradition. Bede's commentaries covering these building themes were composed after Stephanus' Life. However it has been postulated by Kirby that Stephanus' Life underwent additions and revision at a later date.³⁶ This renders its author more mysterious but it also allows one to see how, whoever its author or authors, the text may have been influenced by Bede's later commentaries.

Stephanus' Life was constructed to teach the necessity of suffering. It taught that it was through the experience of suffering that a saint was eventually glorified. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews had expressed that hardship was to be

³⁴ Bede, De Tabernaculo, De Templo, In Ezram et Neemiam, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A.

³⁵ H. Mayr-Harting, The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict and Social Class (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), pp.12-13, 19-22.

³⁶ Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', pp.101-114.

endured as discipline.³⁷ It was the means by which God trained his future servants. Pauline theology had similarly stressed the fact that present suffering equipped the saints for their future glory. Christlikeness was associated with becoming 'despised and rejected by men.'³⁸ Enemies, mockery and scorn were a testimony to the truth of Christian witness and the cost of discipleship. Paul's writings espoused the doctrine that an apostolic career is characterised by suffering which is social and public.

Are they servants of Christ ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move.³⁹

Wilfrid's suffering thus earned him the right to obtain similar apostolic authority as a bishop. In the early part of the Life Stephanus depicted how Wilfrid acquired the credentials necessary to equip him for his future role. At Lindisfarne he learned the psalter. He subsequently learnt it after its Roman use at Canterbury. At Rome he acquired a knowledge of the city of the martyrs, learned the four Gospels, the Easter Rule and other aspects of ecclesiastical discipline. In Gaul, an early site of persecution which was later to become a site of triumph for Wilfrid when he was consecrated, he had experienced the martyrdom of Bishop Dalfinus.⁴⁰ These early

³⁷ Hebrews 12:7.

³⁸ Isaiah 53:3.

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:23-25.

⁴⁰ VW 2, 3, 5, 6.

experiences resulted in a number of notable achievements. Wilfrid was appointed as abbot at Ripon and ordained priest by Agilbert. He then triumphantly espoused the Roman cause at Whitby and achieved elevation to the rank of the episcopate.⁴¹

Subsequent chapters of the Life of Wilfrid depict Wilfrid as a bishop and show him consistently undergoing persecution and deliverance. He was persecuted both by secular rulers and by clergy hostile to his power and devotion to Rome. He acquired deliverance always as the result of his faithful submission to the apostolic see at Rome. His willingness to endure suffering and his consistent appeal to the canonical traditions of Rome led to his ability to triumph over his enemies. Wilfrid is depicted anxious to ensure that his followers were aware of the need to suffer persecution within the Christian life. In chapter thirty-five of the Life, Stephanus showed how Wilfrid encouraged his comrades by quoting to them the words of Hebrews which advise that persecution is to be accepted as part of God's discipline. Wilfrid's final glorification occurred in his final years. With his monasteries restored to him at the synod of Nidd, he became a dedicated patron of his followers, rewarding them with lands and wealth. Stephanus' concern to teach a theology of persecution did not end when Wilfrid himself died. Stephanus knew that persecution would continue because it was built into the very structure of the Christian life. As a saint whose endurance of suffering had ultimately led to his triumph Wilfrid continued to protect the monks at Ripon from persecutors by means of miracles.⁴²

The monastery at Oundle where the saint had died was burnt by ravaging nobles but

⁴¹ VW 8-12.

⁴² VW 66-68.

the house in which he had actually died could not be torched.⁴³

Stephanus' concern with the place of suffering and persecution in determining sanctity was heavily influenced by the canonical Acts of the Apostles. He used particular scenes from Acts as extended metaphors. Wilfrid's dramatic miraculous escape from prison was compared to that of Peter.⁴⁴ Acts, however, did not merely provide the focus for one of Stephanus' miracle stories, it influenced the whole nature of Stephanus' work. Some of Luke's central concerns find mirror images in Stephanus' account. Both works narrate the story of the expansion and growth of the Church through the work of missionary work abroad and recount the spread of the gospel despite persecution and opposition. There are many references to the persecutions suffered by the apostles in Acts. The apostles were flogged and the Jews attempted to kill Paul. James the brother of John was beheaded by Herod. Paul and Barnabas were persecuted at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. Similarly Wilfrid was banished by Egfrith and Aldfrith. Ebroin attempted to have him murdered in Gaul and 'he never ceased to stir up perpetual persecution.'⁴⁵ The tensions inaugurated in the Church by the mission to the gentiles discussed by Luke in the context of the Council of Jerusalem were metaphorically transposed by Stephanus and found their equivalent in the Synod of Whitby. The Celtic Church became equivalent to the gentile world. The missionary means by which the Celts were evangelised and the grounds for their acceptance into the Church were seen as key matters of debate for

⁴³ VW 67.

⁴⁴ VW 38.

⁴⁵ Acts 5:40; 12:2; 13-15; 23:12-22; VW 24-28, 33-39, 45-49.

Stephanus as they were key matters for debate in Luke's account of the problem of the gentiles discussed at the Council of Jerusalem. Wilfrid, like Paul in Acts, assumed the special role of apostle to a people who had formerly been separated from the Church. He strove to bring the Celtic Church into conformity with Rome. Stephanus was also not only influenced by the structure and content of Acts but also by Luke's historical outlook. As a Christian historian, Luke had showed a concern with the relationship between theology and history. He possessed evangelistic intentions. He wanted to record the saving significance of history.⁴⁶ Stephanus shared the same ideals. The story of Wilfrid's life was a story of theological significance. Stephanus grounded spiritual truths in the history of Wilfrid's activities.

It seems clear that Stephanus extended his exploration of Wilfrid as an archetypal persecuted apostle outwith material linking Wilfrid to canonical stories of apostolic activity. Apocryphal acts of the apostles were also a strong influence upon his work.⁴⁷ In these works the apostles are conceived as martyrs suffering persecution and death. Stephanus portrayed Wilfrid adopting the apostolic careers of these martyrs. Most notably he was shown to act in accordance with the lifestyle of Andrew and Peter. He was clearly devoted to both these saints as the concluding chapter of Stephanus' life makes explicitly clear.

But now it is for us to believe fully and perfectly that our intercessor by the sign of the holy cross has been made equal to the Apostles of God, Peter

⁴⁶ I.H. Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (Exeter, 1970); C.K. Barrett, Luke the Historian in Recent Study (London, 1961).

⁴⁷ Foley, 'Imitatio Apostoli: St Wilfrid of York and the Andrew Script', *passim*.

and Andrew, whom he specially loved...⁴⁸

In the case of Peter he exalted Rome as the apostolic see, dedicated the church at Ripon to Peter and steadfastly stood for the Petrine tradition at the synod of Whitby. Similarly Wilfrid was dedicated to Andrew. Arriving at Rome he visited St Andrew's oratory. He also dedicated his church at Hexham and monastery at Oundle to the saint. His companion and friend, Acca, continued his efforts towards beautifying and enriching the church at Hexham.⁴⁹

Apocryphal stories concerning Peter and Andrew were preserved in a number of Latin manuscripts. The Acts of Peter existed in the sixth/seventh century Actus Vercellenses, a codex at Vercelli. Stories concerning Andrew, the apocryphal Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias had been translated into Latin by 350.⁵⁰ Accounts of Andrew's martyrdom were also preserved in the Liber de miraculis beatae Andrae apostoli by Gregory of Tours and in texts by Venantius Fortunatus and Isidore of Seville.⁵¹ Apocryphal legends about Andrew were known in Anglo-Saxon England. An eighth-century manuscript of Anglo-Saxon provenance, the Pseudo-Titus epistle, contains an apocryphon of Andrew. The manuscript was associated with Wurzburg's first bishop, the Anglo-Saxon missionary Burchard of

⁴⁸ VW 68.

⁴⁹ VW 5, 22, 65.

⁵⁰ P.M. Peterson, Andrew, Brother of Simon Peter: his history and his legends, Supplement to Novum Testamentum (Leiden, 1968), p.41.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

Wessex.⁵² Andrew was also the subject of an Old English epic poem Andreas which may have been composed by Wilfrid's patron and disciple Acca.⁵³

The Pseudo-Abdias, a text from late sixth or early seventh century Gaul, preserved an account of the Passio of Andrew and the Acts of John.⁵⁴ Stephanus quoted an apocryphal story concerning John when he described how Wilfrid earned the status of a confessor on offering himself up for martyrdom with Dalfinus in the early part of the Life.

So now our St Wilfrid has become a confessor like John the Apostle and Evangelist, who sat uninjured in a cauldron of boiling oil and drank deadly poison unharmed.⁵⁵

Here Stephanus showed a knowledge of Tertullian's De Praescriptionibus adversus Haereticos which preserved the tradition of John being boiled in oil. However there are two sources which recount the drinking of the poison unharmed. The first was Isidore of Seville's De ortu et obitu Sanctorum and the second the Acts of John in the Pseudo-Abdias.⁵⁶ Both Eusebius and the Pseudo-Abdias recounted the apostle John's activities at Ephesus. In chapter forty four of Stephanus' work, Wilfrid's

⁵² D. de Bruyne, 'Nouveaux fragments des actes de Pierre, de Paul, de Jean, de André, et de l'Apocalypse d'Élie', Revue Bénédictine 25 (1908), pp.149-60. The Pseudo-Titus epistle is translated in New Testament Apocrypha, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1964), vol.2, pp.141-66.

⁵³ Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles, ed. K.R. Brooks (Oxford, 1961); A.S. Cook, 'The Old English Andreas and Bishop Acca of Hexham', Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 26 (1924), pp.245-332.

⁵⁴ Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti, ed. J.A. Fabricius, 3 vols. (Hamburg, 1719), vol. 2, pp.388-742; M.R. James, The Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford, 1924), pp.462-69.

⁵⁵ VW 6.

⁵⁶ The use of Tertullian and Isidore was noted by Colgrave in his edition of the VW, p.155. The account in the Pseudo-Abdias occurs in 5.2, pp.533-36, and 5.20, pp.575-78.

restoration to the see of York and the monastery at Ripon is likened to John's return to Ephesus. This further suggests that Stephanus in some form or other knew of the Pseudo-Abdias.⁵⁷ He may have known of it through the close connections which existed between Wilfrid and Gaul. Alternatively knowledge of it could have been transmitted to Northumbria by Irish evangelists since apocryphal writings circulated widely in Ireland.⁵⁸

Two central features concerning the lives of the apostles stand out in apocryphal writings recounting their activities. The writings recount the persecution and martyrdom the apostles faced at the hands of secular rulers. The Acts of Peter concentrate upon Peter's conflict with the magician Simon.⁵⁹ Wilfrid similarly had to battle against workers of magic when he was faced with the South Saxons and in this incident was also likened to Elijah on Mount Carmel.⁶⁰ Furthermore there are striking parallels between the factors which result in the deaths of Andrew and Peter in apocryphal writings and a central episode in Wilfrid's episcopal career. Peter's death occurred as a result of a conflict with the prefect Agrippa. The concubines of the prefect on hearing Peter's preaching agreed to remain in purity from intercourse with Agrippa. Xanthippe, the wife of Albinus separated herself from his marriage bed to devote herself to Peter.⁶¹ Andrew's death arose from a similar series of

⁵⁷ VW, p.178; Pseudo-Abdias 5.20, pp.575-6.

⁵⁸ M. McNamara, The Apocrypha in the Irish Church (Dublin, 1975), pp.7-9.

⁵⁹ Acts of Peter, in New Testament Apocrypha, vol.2, pp.276-322.

⁶⁰ VW 13.

⁶¹ Acts of Peter, pp.316-22.

circumstances. Aegas ruler in Achaia imprisoned and finally killed Andrew because Andrew had severed Aegas' sexual relations with his wife Maximilla by advising Maximilla to undertake a life of chastity.⁶² These incidents are strikingly similar to Wilfrid's own involvement with Aethlethryth which may have accounted for his fall from Egfrith's favour and his subsequent exile. For not only had Wilfrid ruined Egfrith's marriage but he had also aroused the envy of Egfrith's second wife, Iurminburg, on account of the immense riches he had acquired from Aethelthryth.⁶³

The model of sanctity which taught a theology of persecution and depicted saints in conflict with worldly authorities was also located elsewhere. It was evident within hagiography which had been composed in Gaul. The cult of Saint Martin was well known in early Anglo-Saxon England as is evident from Bede's knowledge of the Martinian writings and the evidence of church dedications.⁶⁴ Although Bede does not appear to have used Sulpicius Severus' writings and his depiction of Cuthbert was influenced by the image of Martin as it was presented in the works of Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus, he would have been acquainted with the basic features of the work through his knowledge of the anonymous monk's text.⁶⁵ Stephanus' Life clearly used Sulpicius Severus' writings. The Life of Saint Martin and the Dialogues influenced a number of Stephanus' miracle stories such as the

⁶² Acts of Andrew, in New Testament Apocrypha, vol.2, pp.409-10.

⁶³ HE IV.19, 12; VW 24.

⁶⁴ P.A. Wilson, 'The Cult of St Martin in the British Isles with particular reference to Candida Casa and Canterbury', Innes Review 19 (1968), pp.129-43.

⁶⁵ Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', pp.117-21. See Chapter three above.

account of how Wilfrid resurrected a dead boy and had him baptised.⁶⁶ However, for Stephanus one of the chief attractions of Sulpicius' image of Saint Martin would have been the fact that Sulpicius composed his works partly in order to show how Martin was beset by enemies and detractors.

Martin's asceticism and his insistence upon maintaining the lifestyle of a monk when consecrated bishop had aroused hostility.⁶⁷ He was criticised by bishops whose lives were largely modelled on those of secular potentates. The antagonism between Martin and his fellow bishops persisted until Martin's death. He was said to have always lived 'with clerics who disagreed with him and with bishops who were hostile to him.'⁶⁸ Brice, his successor as bishop at Tours, launched an enraged attack against him. Sulpicius showed how under the influence of demons Brice doubted the validity of Martin's miraculous powers and claimed that Martin's early career as a soldier had soiled his life.⁶⁹ Ithacius the bishop of Ossonuba in Spain had accused Martin of supporting the heretical movement known as Priscillianism.⁷⁰ Martin had also aroused the hostility of secular figures. The *Dialogues* recount how he was beaten with whips and sticks by soldiers. The emperor Valentinian I ordered him to be refused entry to the palace gates but he gained admittance through divine

⁶⁶ VW 18; Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini* 7, ed. J. Fontaine, SC 133 (Paris, 1967-69), pp.266-69; *Dialogi* II.4, ed. C. Halm, CSEL 1 (1866), pp.184-85.

⁶⁷ C. Stancliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer* (Oxford, 1983), pp.249-96.

⁶⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* 1.24.3, CSEL 1, p.177.

⁶⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* III.15, CSEL 1, pp.213-14.

⁷⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II.50, ed. C. Halm, CSEL 1 (1866), p.103; *Dialogi* III.12, CSEL 1, p.210.

aid and caused the imperial chair to burst into flames and burn the emperor.⁷¹ In an epistle written to the deacon Aurelius, Sulpicius credited Martin with virtual martyrdom. He stated how although Martin had not suffered a martyr's death, he had achieved martyrdom without shedding his blood by undergoing persecution for the sake of Christ throughout his life.⁷² Although Sulpicius' description of Martin's suffering in this epistle is largely derived from the words of Saint Paul, it is clear from incidents recounted elsewhere in the Martinian writings that Martin was believed to have struggled against human and spiritual wickedness. He was believed to have often compromised his own safety in order to save the lives of others.⁷³

In recounting the hostile environment within which Martin operated, Sulpicius was able to use Martin as a weapon through which he could beat and criticise the state of the church in Gaul. Martin presented himself as a candidate for episcopacy with unkempt hair and dress. Sulpicius contrasted his humility and asceticism with the lust, avarice and ambition of other Gallic bishops.⁷⁴ The Dialogues claimed that elevation to the episcopate caused many clerics to adopt a more worldly lifestyle. Whereas formerly they would travel on foot or on a donkey, they became accustomed to ride 'grandly on foaming horses' and built grand residences when

⁷¹ Sulpicius Severus, Dialogi II.3, 5, CSEL 1, pp.183-4, 186-7.

⁷² Sulpicius Severus, Epistulae 2, ed. J. Fontaine, SC 133 (Paris, 1967-69), pp.324-334.

⁷³ Sulpicius Severus, Dialogi II.7, III.4, 11-13, CSEL 1, pp.188-89, 201-02, 208-11; Vita Martini 3, 14, 18, 22, pp.256-59, 282-85, 290-92, 300-2.

⁷⁴ Sulpicius Severus, Chronica I.23; II.17, 32, 46, CSEL 1, pp.25-6, 73-4, 86-7, 99-100; Dialogi I.21, CSEL 1, pp.173-4.

previously they had lived in huts.⁷⁵ In many ways Stephanus' presentation of Wilfrid contrasted sharply with the images which had been created of Saint Martin since Wilfrid was clearly perceived as a noble man of wealth and power in a manner akin to Martin's enemies. However, Sulpicius' writings had bequeathed to Stephanus a portrait of a saint who had suffered persecution within the world. Stephanus also found further examples of persecuted bishops in other texts which came from Gaul. In 505 Caesarius of Arles had been accused by the Visigothic ruler Alaric of attempting to bring the city and territory of Arles under Burgundian rule and had been sent into exile.⁷⁶ Further texts produced in Gaul also emphasised the manner in which a number of bishops had suffered martyrdom.

Wilfrid was said by Stephanus to have visited Lyons.⁷⁷ Lyons was noted for its long tradition of martyrs. In his Liber in Gloria Martyrum, Gregory of Tours named forty-eight martyrs who had suffered in Lyons. These included Photinus and Irenaeus. It was claimed that the dust from the tombs of these martyrs possessed healing properties.⁷⁸ Stephanus stated that it was during Wilfrid's stay in Lyons that he witnessed the martyrdom of Bishop Dalfinus. There are historical problems arising from this account which have been analysed in detail elsewhere. Briefly it is assumed that Wilfrid cannot historically have witnessed this martyrdom which was in fact the

⁷⁵ Sulpicius Severus, Dialogi I.21, CSEL 1, pp.173-4.

⁷⁶ Vita Caesarii I.21, MGH SRM 3, p.465.

⁷⁷ VW 3, 6.

⁷⁸ Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Martyrum 48-9, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.521-22.

martyrdom of Aunemund and that Stephanus invented Wilfrid's involvement in it to establish his saintly credentials at an early stage in the work.⁷⁹ Whether Wilfrid was actually present at the event described is unimportant, what is important is that Stephanus somehow knew of the martyrdom of Aunemund and used an account of it in his own work.

The Acta Aunemundi is the most detailed account of Aunemund's martyrdom.⁸⁰ It describes the downfall of a powerful aristocratic bishop involved closely with the royal court who had baptised or stood as godfather to Clothar the first born son of Clovis II.⁸¹ Aunemund's power and influence generated hostility: 'whilst he stretched out his arm to feel the glory of his achievement, it certainly seemed to the brethren that he was in company too elevated and he fell back as everybody came to hate him. Such people treacherously began to plot against him...' ⁸² He was killed by a group of rival clergy and courtiers at Macon and his body later moved to Lyons. The early manuscript tradition of the Acta Aunemundi has not survived and this has led many to question the authenticity of its dating. It seems likely that the text as it survives is a tenth-century revision of an earlier work.

⁷⁹ A. Coville, Recherches sur l'histoire de Lyon du Vme au IXme siècle (450-800) (Paris, 1928), pp.381-5; J.L Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: the careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History', Studies in Church History, Subsidia, I (1978), pp.31-77, repr. in J.L. Nelson, Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe (London, 1986), pp.1-48; Goffart, Narrators, p.288.

⁸⁰ Acta S.Aunemundi alias Dalfini episcopi, ed. J. Carnandet, in Acta Sanctorum, Septembris, Vol. VII (Paris and Rome, 1867), pp.694-98.

⁸¹ Acta Aunemundi 2, 8, pp. 694-5.

⁸² Acta Aunemundi 2, p.695.

Its prologue ends with a reference to a previous account of Aunemund's life and it calls Aunemund bishop throughout whereas after the Merovingian period the head of the church of Lyons was referred to by his proper title of archbishop.⁸³ Both the Acta Aunemundi and the Life of Wilfrid convey a picture of a bishop ready to battle with the secular authorities. Wadlebert, abbot of Luxeuil and Aunemundus' counsellor assumes a similar role to that played by Wilfrid in Stephanus' account of the martyrdom. Stephanus utilised the story of the death of one powerful bishop to begin his story of the life of another. He established the theme of martyrdom at the beginning of his Life.

Further Gallic bishops had suffered martyrdom. The Passiones Leudegarii recount the death of the bishop of Autun who led a revolt against Ebroin, mayor of the palace. The first account of Leudegar's life and martyrdom seems to have been compiled shortly after 680.⁸⁴ This text possesses a highly narrative framework in a similar vein to the Life of Wilfrid and like Stephanus its author spoke of *invidia*, hatred or envy directed against the bishop.⁸⁵ Later accounts of Leudegar's martyrdom were marked by less political detail since there was less need to defend

⁸³ Coville, Recherches, pp.372-5; P. Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography', Past and Present 127 (1990), pp.26-7; P. Fouracre and R. Gerberding, The Making of Merovingian History (forthcoming). I am grateful to Paul Fouracre for making available to me material on the Acta Aunemundi in advance of publication.

⁸⁴ W. Wattenbach and W. Levison, Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter: Vorzeit und Karolinger, 1 (Weimar, 1952), p.129. Passio Leudegarii I, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 5, pp.282-322.

⁸⁵ VW 14, 24, 40; Passio Leudegarii I, 8, 9, 19, 21, 28, 33, MGH SRM 5, pp.289-91, 300-01, 302-3, 308-10, 314-5.

Leudegar's sanctity by explaining the awkward details of his career.⁸⁶ Like Aunemund and Wilfrid, Leudegar was a leading aristocratic figure who possessed close connections with the royal court. His brother was count of Paris and his uncle was bishop of Poitiers. Although on his appointment to the see of Autun he had restored order following a period of rivalry which had arisen over the issue of the control of the bishopric, he attracted the hostility of an element within the clergy who planned to murder him.⁸⁷ In the first account of his life Leudegar is depicted as a generous lord who disposes of his wealth before his arrest and is then martyred as a self-sacrificing shepherd. In depicting Ebroin as a villain, the text conveyed an identical theme to that of the Life of Wilfrid.⁸⁸

The Passio Praejecti was a further text which described the martyrdom of a powerful royally connected Merovingian bishop, Praejectus bishop of Clermont.⁸⁹ The text gave a clear account of the manner in which envy operated in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a clerical community. Praejectus' martyrdom, like that of Leudegar, was connected with factional conflict arising from his succession to the episcopal see. He had been involved in a legal dispute with Hector, the ruler of Marseilles. The dispute concerned property held by the Church of Clermont which Hector claimed belonged to his spouse. Praejectus won the case but its outcome

⁸⁶ Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography', pp.15, 20-21.

⁸⁷ Passio Leudegarii I 2, MGH SRM 5, pp.284-5.

⁸⁸ VW 25, 27, 33.

⁸⁹ Passio Praejecti, ed B. Krusch, MGH SRM 5, pp.225-48.

aroused the hostility of powerful local people.⁹⁰ He was murdered by the Saxon Radbert and was said to have willingly given himself as a martyr. The assassins mistook his protector Abbot Amarinus for him and having killed Amarinus were departing but Praejectus called them back and offered himself to die.⁹¹

Stephanus was also acquainted with the text of a Life which depicted another persecuted saint and also had a Gallic background, Jonas' Life of the wandering Irish monk Columbanus.⁹² As this text had influenced Bede's writings so Stephanus used it to emphasise the monastic character of Wilfrid's episcopate and illustrate how his portrait of Wilfrid attempted to synthesise Celtic and Roman religious ideals. The parallels between this text and Stephanus' Life were both general and specific. In general terms both Lives were characterised by the presence of divine light at the saint's birth signifying his election, both described the relationship between the saint and his parents in similar terms, both described how the saint entered a monastery at an early age but then engaged in *peregrinatio* to foreign shores, both showed the saint in possession of large numbers of followers who were stylised as the children of Israel and both were marked by miracle stories which described the loosening of chains from prisoners as a result of the power of the saint.⁹³ A further indication that Stephanus knew of the Life of Columbanus is evident from his account of how

⁹⁰ Passio Praejecti 23-4, 27, MGH SRM 5, pp.239-40, 241-2.

⁹¹ Passio Praejecti 30-31, MGH SRM 5, pp.243-44.

⁹² Jonas, Vita Columbani, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, pp.61-152; I.N. Wood, 'The Vita Columbani and Merovingian Hagiography', Peritia 1 (1982), pp.63-80.

⁹³ Vita Columbani I. 2-7, 9, 19-20, MGH SRM 4, pp.66-74, 75, 87-93; VW 1-4, 25, 34-5, 38, 44.

Wilfrid was miraculously healed by Saint Michael having fallen ill near Meaux when returning from Rome. This story closely parallels an account in the Life of Columbanus when abbot Bertulf was cured by Saint Peter having also fallen ill when returning from Rome.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Meaux, the site of Wilfrid's stay, was a centre of Columbanian monasticism. Columbanus had blessed the household of Chagneric and his daughter Burgundofara at Meaux.⁹⁵ Burgundofara had founded a monastery at Faremoutiers in the diocese of Meaux and her brother, Faro, had become bishop of the see.⁹⁶

Above all, however, for Stephanus the Life of Columbanus depicted a saint persecuted by secular powers. Columbanus was uncompromising with kings and queens. The most famous section of Jonas' work concerns the account of the conflict between Columbanus, King Theuderich and Theuderich's grandmother, Brunhild. Columbanus chastised Theuderich for fathering illegitimate children through his concubines. This aroused the wrath of Brunhild and Columbanus was banished to Besançon. Continual persecution led to him wandering through Auxerre, Orléans and Tours.⁹⁷ He was eventually received favourably by the Lombard king Agilulf and granted a site in the Apennines where he created the monastic colony of Bobbio.⁹⁸ When the accounts of persecution described in the Life of Columbanus and the Life

⁹⁴ VW 56; Vita Columbani II. 23, MGH SRM 4, pp.143-47.

⁹⁵ Vita Columbani I. 26, MGH SRM 4, pp.99-100.

⁹⁶ Vita Columbani II. 7, 11, 21, MGH SRM 4, pp.119-121, 130-31, 141-42.

⁹⁷ Vita Columbani I.18-22, MGH SRM 4, pp.86-97.

⁹⁸ Vita Columbani I.30, MGH SRM 4, pp.106-08.

of Wilfrid are compared the most striking feature is that both works depict a persecuting queen as Jezebel. Stephanus claimed that Balthild, the queen who ordered Dalphinus' death in Lyons, was like Jezebel. He also described Iurminburg in similar terms. Jonas similarly depicted Brunhild as Jezebel.⁹⁹ As was noted above, there are historical problems evident within Stephanus' account of the death of Dalphinus. It is generally assumed that Stephanus was confused about the circumstances surrounding this martyrdom. It is odd that he should have associated Balthild with the death of the archbishop of Lyons. She was closely associated with Columbanian monasticism through her connections with Jouarre.¹⁰⁰ This was the monastery which contained the tomb of Wilfrid's patron Agilbert. Agilbert was the Frankish bishop of the West Saxons who had ordained Wilfrid priest and who was later, as bishop of Paris, involved in his consecration.¹⁰¹ However, the problem posed by Stephanus naming the persecuting queen as Balthild is partially solved through the fact that in one of the two surviving manuscripts of the Life of Wilfrid she is named not as Balthild but as Brunhild.¹⁰² Given that the depiction of queens as Jezebels is not common in early medieval hagiography, it is therefore likely that Stephanus' use of this motif was derived from Jonas.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ VW 6, 24; Vita Columbani I. 18, MGH SRM 4, p.86.

¹⁰⁰ Vita Balthildis 8, MGH SRM 2, pp.491-3.

¹⁰¹ VW 9, 12.

¹⁰² VW, pp.xiii-xv.

¹⁰³ Knowledge of Jonas' work was not widespread in seventh-century Francia although Fredegar who was probably writing in the late 650s knew of it and quoted extensively from the section in which Brunhild was described as Jezebel. Fredegar IV. 36, MGH SRM 2, pp.134-38 also in The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar, ed. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill

Stephanus' knowledge and use of texts depicting the lives of persecuted bishops and monks was linked to the connections which existed between the intellectual milieu of Columbanian houses and Wilfridian foundations. It has been shown how Aunemundus was accompanied by the abbot of Luxeuil in the days preceding his martyrdom. Luxeuil was Columbanus' first major foundation and thus it would appear that Aunemundus had close connections with this monastery which was a notable nursery of monk-bishops. At least eleven monks from Luxeuil had been appointed to Gallic sees in the seventh century.¹⁰⁴ Desiderius, bishop of Vienne, had been closely associated with Columbanian monasticism and had suffered persecution at the hands of Brunhild. He was exiled and stoned to death for criticising Theuderic and his concubines as Columbanus had done.¹⁰⁵

Eligius of Noyon was a further Merovingian bishop dedicated to the support of Columbanian monasticism.¹⁰⁶ Active as a functionary at the courts of kings Clothar II and Dagobert I, he had founded a monastery at Solignac. The Life of Eligius is not concerned with recording how he suffered extensive persecution or a martyr's death. However, as a result of his close connections with the royal court and active involvement in political affairs, the participation of the bishop in a number of disputes with various secular and ecclesiastical figures was recorded. Eligius visited

(London, 1960); Wood, 'The Vita Columbani and Merovingian Hagiography', pp.68-70; W. Goffart, 'The Fredegar Problem Reconsidered', Speculum 38 (1963), pp.206-41.

¹⁰⁴ F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich (Munich-Vienna, 1965), pp.121-41.

¹⁰⁵ Passio Desiderii, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp.638-45.

¹⁰⁶ Vita Eligii, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, pp.663-741; Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, pp.124-41.

a *vicus* near Noyon and preached against the dancing and superstitions practiced by the inhabitants. He encountered opposition when trying to impose his episcopal authority on this rural community formerly under the control of a local magnate, Erchinoald the *major domus* of the Neustrian palace. The followers of Erchinoald threatened to lynch Eligius when he preached against their superstitious practices.¹⁰⁷ The conflict between Eligius and Erchinoald also arose from Eligius' attempts to control cult centres in his diocese. This was expressed in his concern to stop Erchinoald building a monastery over the body of the Irish saint, Fursey.¹⁰⁸ Stephanus' depiction of a persecuted saint influenced by ideals of martyrdom although closely connected to texts from Gaul did not, however, merely locate Wilfrid within a Gallic tradition of episcopal sanctity. He also looked to Rome.

Pope Martin I was the only pope from the time of Constantine until the beginning of the eighth century to endure martyrdom. He died in exile having been found guilty of treason and imprisoned by the emperor in 655.¹⁰⁹ Martin's death arose from his refusal to compromise with the emperor on Christological issues. This refusal had found expression in his convening of the Lateran council of 649 which had condemned Monotheletism and in so doing undermined the emperor's attempts to obtain Monophysite support in his fight against the Arabs and Persians.¹¹⁰ The

¹⁰⁷ *Vita Eligii* II.20, MGH SRM 4, pp.711-12.

¹⁰⁸ *Vita Fursei* 10, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, pp.439-40.

¹⁰⁹ *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886-92), vol.1, pp.336-40.

¹¹⁰ J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987), pp.253-9; T.S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800* (Rome, 1984), pp.175-80.

death of a pope for his refusal to compromise over matters of church doctrine and custom in the face of secular power at a time when Wilfrid was believed to have recently visited Rome arguably could have influenced Stephanus' presentation of Wilfrid's own commitment to orthodoxy and willingness to suffer for it. Wilfrid's battles with Egfrith and Aldfrith mirror Martin's with the emperor. The result was exile and persecution. The lesson to be learnt was that those within the church who adhered to apostolic Roman authority must be prepared to face suffering.

Stephanus' portrayal of Wilfrid's career and stress upon the need for a saint to suffer at the hands of secular and ecclesiastical authorities cannot however simply be equated with an ideal of martyrdom. This was because martyrdom itself was conceived in a manner of different ways in a number of different texts. Within the Irish tradition a three-fold classification of martyrdom had developed and was denoted by the colours red, white and green. White and green martyrdom involved separation from men, toils and fasting. Red martyrdom involved persecution and destruction.¹¹¹ Gregory the Great had written of how suffering, change and death had come into the world as a result of sin.¹¹² He had also written of an ideal of public martyrdom which occurred during times of persecution. However, as a result of the development of monasticism the ascetic ideal of withdrawal from the world, fasting and purification of the body had become perceived as a form of martyrdom.

¹¹¹ Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse, ed. W. Stokes and J. Strachan (Cambridge, 1901-3), vol.2, pp.246-7.

¹¹² Gregory the Great, Moralia in Job, ed. M. Adriaen, 5.34.63, CCSL 143, p.262; 12.15.19, CCSL 143A, p.640; 11.50.68, CCSL 143A, pp.624-6; 25.3.4, CCSL 143B, p.1231.

This form of martyrdom Gregory had defined as secret martyrdom.¹¹³ In the Liber in Gloria Martyrum Gregory of Tours had also described a form of martyrdom which involved struggle and contest but not necessarily death where men and women were portrayed as 'athletes of Christ.'¹¹⁴ During a time of persecution, Felix of Nola had endured torture and imprisonment.¹¹⁵ However, Gregory of Tours had also reevaluated martyrdom by transposing it from the context of persecution by the godless and stressing that believers could become martyrs by undergoing moral struggle. It was possible for people to become martyrs by making themselves their own persecutors and destroying their vices.¹¹⁶ In his commentary on Luke, Bede also spoke of a form of sacrifice that did not involve physical death. He wrote of the manner in which by means of the death of pride, a humble person transformed by a form of death could challenge and overcome evil, demonic forces in the world.¹¹⁷

Stephanus perceived Wilfrid in terms of a type of martyrdom which involved persecution such as the ideal of red martyrdom and Gregory the Great's concept of public martyrdom. However, Wilfrid himself did not earn the title of martyr. This

¹¹³ Gregory the Great, Dialogues III.26, ed. A. de Vogüé, SC 260 (Paris 1978-80), pp.371-3; A.C. Rush, 'Spiritual Martyrdom in St Gregory the Great', Theological Studies 23 (1962), pp.569-89.

¹¹⁴ Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Martyrum 52, 53, 72, MGH SRM 1.2, pp. 525, 536-37. For a general discussion of the term 'martyr' see H. Delehaye, Sanctus. Essai sur le culte des saints dans l'antiquité Subsidia hagiographica 17 (Brussels, 1927), pp.74-121. For an analysis of the place of martyrdom in the ascetic life see E.E. Malone, The Monk and the Martyr (Washington, 1950).

¹¹⁵ Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Martyrum 103, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.557-59.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 106, p.561.

¹¹⁷ Bede, In Lucam, pp.218-19. See further V.I.J. Flint, The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe (Princeton, 1991), pp.181-82.

is because Stephanus believed that the martyr must by definition die.¹¹⁸ When he experienced the martyrdom at Lyons and offered himself for martyrdom, Wilfrid was designated a confessor rather than a martyr by Stephanus. Stephanus' view of how a saint acquired the status of martyr and confessor was based upon a tradition which had been shaped by the apologetic traditions of the early Church. In this tradition a confessor was not merely a saint whose life testified to the truth of Christ's own life but a saint who had been persecuted by secular powers without suffering death. This was why John the Evangelist, to whom Stephanus compared Wilfrid in the account of Dalfinus' martyrdom, was similarly considered a confessor and not a martyr. Although he suffered, he had survived the boiling oil.¹¹⁹

In contrast other early Anglo-Saxon bishops apart from Wilfrid had been perceived in terms of a form of martyrdom akin to the Irish ideal of white and green martyrdom, Gregory the Great's concept of secret martyrdom and Gregory of Tours' concept of martyrdom involving moral struggle. Aidan, John of Beverley, Chad and Cedd were not depicted in conflict with secular powers by Bede. Although involved with secular powers they did not suffer persecution. Instead they were praised for their humility, fasting and withdrawal into solitude.¹²⁰ Bede showed how Aidan's

¹¹⁸ Although the details of the author of the Vita Wilfridi are still unclear as has been noted in Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"' it seems likely that the author should certainly be called 'Stephanus' as noted in Wallace-Hadrill, Historical Commentary, p.139 and W. Goffart, 'The Historia Ecclesiastica: Bede's Agenda and Ours', Haskins Society Journal 2 (1990), pp.34-5. The name Stephanus may in itself be significant in regard to the author's ideas concerning the concept of martyrdom since he bore the same name as the first martyr recorded in the Book of Acts.

¹¹⁹ VW 6.

¹²⁰ HE III.3, 5, 14-17, 21-3, 25-6, 28; IV.2-3, 23; V.2-7. See Chapter three above.

relationship with Oswine was characterised by mutual respect. Oswine had provided Aidan with a horse but Aidan gave the horse away to a beggar. Oswine chastised him for such an action but later pleaded for forgiveness. Aidan revered this plea for forgiveness. He cried bitterly because of the piety he saw in the king's action and was aware that the king would imminently die.¹²¹ Cuthbert also was not despised but revered by secular authorities to whom he gave advice. Although he prophesied the death of Egfrith as a result of his campaign against the Picts, he was not depicted in an active quarrel with the king.¹²² Rather than banishing Cuthbert into exile, Egfrith begged the reluctant Cuthbert to become a bishop.¹²³ The anonymous monk twice referred to Cuthbert as a martyr.¹²⁴ However, he had made no real distinction between the saint as martyr and confessor and did not equate either status with the suffering of persecution. Stephanus, however, consistently equated both the status of martyr and confessor with the suffering of persecution. His text is unique amongst early Anglo-Saxon hagiography through its emphasis upon an ideal of sanctity which teaches the necessity of persecution. Consequently, Wilfrid himself is unique among early Anglo-Saxon bishops in possessing a spiritual authority which was derived from persecution by secular rulers.

Stephanus' portrayal of Wilfrid as a bishop who suffered persecution as a result of his active participation in the affairs of the secular world arose from his

¹²¹ HE III.14.

¹²² VCA III.6; IV.8; VCP 24, 27; HE IV.26.

¹²³ VCA IV.1; VCP 24; HE IV.27-8.

¹²⁴ VCA IV.15, 17.

understanding of how God intervened in the world. Differing conceptions about the manner in which the divine interacted with the human account for the different modes of sanctity within which Anglo-Saxon bishops were perceived to operate. Materially Cuthbert and Wilfrid moved in the same world. From Bede and the anonymous monk it is clear that Cuthbert encountered some of the same people as Wilfrid. The abbesses Aebbe and Aelfflaed and kings Egfrith and Aldfrith feature in the Lives of Cuthbert.¹²⁵ Although Bede and the anonymous monk shared with Stephanus a concern for the monastic nature of the episcopate, they embraced different theological views from those held by Stephanus. These views concerned the manner in which evil manifested itself in the world and the manner in which God's redemptive power was able to overcome it.

Cuthbert's imitation of the apostles involved frequent prayer, fasting, the keeping of vigils, avoidance of worldly honour, withdrawal into solitude and the working of miracles largely associated with healing. Bede had shown that bishops such as Aidan and John of Beverley behaved in a similar manner. Cuthbert's battle with evil did not take place against secular rulers but against the dark forces of nature. For Cuthbert the fall created estrangement between man and the natural world. Evil took the form of disease, hunger and lack of shelter. He had to expel devils from Farne Island before he could establish a dwelling place.¹²⁶ However, the natural world for Cuthbert was also the site of God's redemptive power. Through nature it was possible to experience contact with the divine. Through exposing

¹²⁵ VCA II.3; III.6; IV.3, 7-8, 10; VCP 10, 23-4, 27, 34.

¹²⁶ VCA III.1; VCP 17; HE IV.28.

himself to the hardships of nature by means of such acts as the giving away of his bread to a stranger at Ripon, Cuthbert was able to achieve mastery over the natural world.¹²⁷ The animals ministered to him. Ravens sought his forgiveness, sea animals warmed his feet and an eagle brought him food.¹²⁸

In contrast Stephanus located evil and suffering not in nature but in social relationships. Evil broke the bonds of community and severed personal relationships. Just as Cain and Abel became estranged from one another so Wilfrid became estranged from kings, bishops and clergy. In the Life of Wilfrid evil strikes most frequently at figures of high status who bear responsibility over others. Queen Iurminburg brought evil upon herself by wearing Wilfrid's reliquary as an ornament.¹²⁹ Not all rulers are shown to be affected by evil, however. Stephanus evaluated and judged their actions according to their ability to submit to the authority of the Roman Church. Thus obedient kings such as Caedwalla befriended Wilfrid and submitted to Roman customs.¹³⁰ Stephanus also located God's redemptive power in the world of social relationships. Reconciliation with God is shown to bring with it reconciliation in social relationships. Thus those who persecuted Wilfrid such as Theodore had the opportunity to become reconciled with him if they treated him well.¹³¹

¹²⁷ VCA II.2; VCP 7.

¹²⁸ VCA II.3, 5; III.4-5; VCP 10, 12, 20-1.

¹²⁹ VW 34.

¹³⁰ VW 42.

¹³¹ VW 24, 43.

Recognition of the differences which existed between the image of Wilfrid created by Stephanus and that of Cuthbert created by Bede and the anonymous monk should not ignore the similarities between them. As has been noted both were perceived as bishops in a monastic mould who sought to combine the episcopal and monastic roles. Bede's conviction that there was a close connection between the monastic and pastoral lives was reflected in Wilfrid's career. Also since Wilfrid was a monk he did actively engage in ascetic practices. In his early life he impressed King Erconberht of Kent with his continual prayers, fastings, readings and vigils. Once consecrated bishop he continued to live abstemiously, never by himself drinking his cup to the dregs and washing his body with holy water.¹³² Stephanus also praised an ascetic hermit Caelin who belonged to the Ripon *familia* and was held in high regard by Wilfrid.¹³³ In order to compose the preface to his own work, Stephanus adopted the anonymous Life of Cuthbert.¹³⁴ This action can be attributed to a variety of motives. One explanation may simply have been that Stephanus was aware of the manner in which hagiography worked as a literary genre. He knew that hagiographical texts were created by incorporating references and allusions to other saints Lives within the Life of the saint actually being narrated. Consequently he sought to utilise a text which was easily and readily available to piece together his own text. The anonymous monk's preface had itself copied from Sulpicius Severus' Life of Saint Martin and the Life of Saint Antony. It may however, have consciously

¹³² VW 3, 21.

¹³³ VW 64.

¹³⁴ VW 11 also copied from VCA IV.1.

been Stephanus' intention to begin his text with allusion to a recently composed hagiographical work in order that his exploration of how the episcopal career of Wilfrid differed from that of Cuthbert may have had a firmer impact. Alternatively, he may have wanted to express the fact that despite the differences between Wilfrid and Cuthbert they possessed solidarity with each other as servants of God. It should be recognised that although Stephanus' views concerning the nature of episcopal sanctity differed from those of Bede this does not necessarily imply that the two were actively hostile towards each other.

Wilfrid as Pilgrim, Teacher and Lawgiver

Alongside espousing a view of episcopal sanctity which was based upon the theological assumption that Christian discipleship involved the need to arouse and suffer persecution, Stephanus explored a number of other themes which characterised Wilfrid's episcopal power and authority. Wilfrid was a pilgrim. His episcopal power had been moulded through his involvement in pilgrimage to Gaul and Rome. Pilgrimage to Rome exposed him to influences and traditions which he came to practice and defend. The undertaking of pilgrimage to Rome to acquire relics, books, paintings and other sacred objects was a characteristic feature of the early Anglo-Saxon Church.¹³⁵ As a means by which an individual participated in religious ritual,

¹³⁵ HA 2-4, 6-7, 9, 11, 15-16; Anon, Vita Ceolfridi 9, 21, 37, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. I, pp.388-404; HE IV.18; V.19; Bede, Opera Homiletica I.13, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, pp.88-94. Journeys to Rome were also made by Notthelm, Laurence, Peter, Mellitus, Romanus, Wigheard, Acca, Otford and Willibrord, HE Preface; I.27; II.4, 20; III.13, 29; IV.1, 23; V.11, 19. Bede also noted how certain pious kings visited or expressed a desire to visit Rome HE IV.5; V.7, 19. On these kings see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the

pilgrimage not only provided the church with material benefits but also possessed theological significance.¹³⁶

Augustine had conceived the world as marked by a division into two cities, the earthly city of sin and death and the heavenly city of redemption and salvation. These two cities were viewed in eschatological terms. The opposition between them, though present in historical realities, was invisible. They would only be truly separated at the Last Judgement. The individual Christian was thus perceived to live the life of a pilgrim on earth where heavenly and earthly values were intertwined.¹³⁷ These ideas were explored in Bede's biblical commentaries. In De Templo Bede wrote.

The house of God which King Solomon built in Jerusalem was made as a figure of the holy universal church which from its first election to its end is growing daily towards that end by the grace of the King, it is being built up in his peace which is redemption; a part of it still in pilgrimage, a part free from the hardships of pilgrimage and reigning with him already in heaven.¹³⁸

Continent (Oxford, 1971), pp.88-90; C. Stancliffe, 'Kings Who Opted Out', in Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, pp.154-76.

¹³⁶ Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives, ed. V. Turner and E. Turner (Oxford, 1978); V. Turner, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society (Ithaca, New York, 1974).

¹³⁷ Augustine, De Civitate Dei, 1.35, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47-48, pp.33-4. For an analysis of Augustine's thought on this issue see the perceptive comment of R.A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine (Cambridge, 1970), pp.154-186. Full treatment is found in J.Van Oort, Jerusalem and Babylon, A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities (Leiden, 1991).

¹³⁸ 'Domus Dei quam aedificavit rex Salomon in Hierusalem in figuram facta est sanctae universalis ecclesiae quae a primo electo usque ad ultimum qui in fine mundi nasciturus est cotidie per gratiam regis pacifici sui videlicet redemptoris aedificatur quae partim adhuc peregrinatur ab illo in terris partim euasis peregrinandi aerumnis cum illo iam regnat in caelis...', De Templo, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, p.147.

This idea of pilgrimage is crystallised in Stephanus' portrayal of Wilfrid. Stephanus equated Wilfrid's travels not merely with the wanderings of an earthly minded bishop anxious to defend his own power. He presented each act of wandering by Wilfrid in terms which pointed to an interconnection between heavenly and earthly values. Thus whilst in Gaul in the early part of the Life, Stephanus narrated how Wilfrid was offered Dalfinus' niece in marriage. His reply showed that although he moved in the world he was concerned with his future place in heaven. He stated.

My vows have been rendered to the Lord and I will fulfil them, leaving my kin and my father's house as Abraham did, to visit the Apostolic See and to learn the rules of ecclesiastical discipline so that our nation may grow in the service of God...Everyone that hath forsaken father or mother and so forth shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.¹³⁹

It seems clear that Stephanus' theological knowledge, which had enabled him to read and utilise Bede's commentaries, would have equipped him to understand the theological ideas contained within the concept of pilgrimage. His Life thus explored how far Wilfrid stood as an embodiment of such ideas.

Persecution had equipped Wilfrid to be a bishop. As a bishop Wilfrid was equipped to be a teacher. Stephanus was quite explicit about what Wilfrid's teaching duties as both bishop and abbot were. The content of his teaching involved preaching the gospel and offering rudimentary instruction in the basis tenets of the Christian faith. Wilfrid's teaching was primarily rooted in an awareness of the institutional rather than the personal significance of episcopal office. Wilfrid had acquired a deep respect for and knowledge of the 'rules of ecclesiastical discipline.'¹⁴⁰ He was

¹³⁹ VW 4.

¹⁴⁰ VW 5.

perceived by Stephanus to adhere consistently to the teaching of the Roman Church. He taught the Roman observance of Easter, instructed his monks in the use of a double choir, and was credited with the introduction of the Rule of Saint Benedict into England.¹⁴¹ In an early stage in his career he taught Alfrith the Christian greeting of peace. It was this display of erudition before Alfrith which earned him ordination as abbot at Ripon.¹⁴² However, it was his performance at the Synod of Whitby which marked him out for the episcopate.

Wilfrid's involvement in the Synod of Whitby revealed his devotion to the canons, laws and customs of the Roman Church. This devotion provided him with the content and the means to formulate a powerful critique of the Ionan tradition. Wilfrid's faith was founded upon the fact that the church of Rome was the sole source of ecclesiastical authority and demanded unconditional obedience. Through the apostles Rome had inherited Christ's teachings and the right to act as the authoritative interpreter of these teachings. Wilfrid's commitment to these teachings shaped the manner in which he lived as a bishop. His continual banishment and exile involved consistent appeal to Rome. He claimed that his enemies violated the laws and sacred canons. However, his loyalty to Rome was not merely a loyalty to the Pope. He was vindicated by a council of bishops with the Pope acting as its chief mouthpiece.¹⁴³ At the council of Austerfield, Wilfrid placed devotion to Rome above loyalty to his own spiritual chief, the archbishop. At this council Stephanus depicted Wilfrid

¹⁴¹ VW 5, 7, 10, 14, 47.

¹⁴² VW 7-8.

¹⁴³ VW 29-33, 52-3.

reminding his opponents of his achievements. All of these involved the bringing of Roman customs to Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁴⁴

Wilfrid's devotion to canons and rules also found expression in his introduction of the Benedictine Rule into England.¹⁴⁵ However, he did not adhere to the Rule in its full form but modified it according to his own concerns. He was entirely untroubled by the fact that the Rule required an abbot to be elected by the consent of his own community and forbade abbots from appointing their own kinsmen since he appointed his kinsman Tatberht to succeed him at Ripon.¹⁴⁶ This eclectic approach towards the management of his monasteries again links Wilfrid to Columbanian monasticism. The Benedictine Rule was particularly combined with other Rules and used in various combinations in seventh-century Francia in monastic houses associated with Columbanus and his disciples. Luxeuil, Besançon, Arles, Faremoutiers en Brie and Jouarre were all known to have followed mixed Columbanian-Benedictine Rules.¹⁴⁷ Wilfrid's concern to secure papal privileges for his monastic houses may also reflect the absorption of Columbanian tradition at Ripon and Hexham. Bobbio had been granted a papal privilege by Pope Honorius.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ VW 46-7.

¹⁴⁵ VW 14, 47.

¹⁴⁶ Regula Sancti Benedicti 64, ed. A. de Vogüé, SC 182 (Paris 1971-2), pp.648-53; VW 63.

¹⁴⁷ Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, pp.269-92; P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in Famulus Christi, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.141-6.

¹⁴⁸ Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', pp.147-8.

Wilfrid's role as a teacher was a public one. Stephanus was more forthcoming about Wilfrid's activities within the church at large than about those of a private nature where he exercised his abbatial authority over his monks. This was because, for Stephanus, Wilfrid's episcopate was decisive in the conversion history of the Anglo-Saxons. The references to teaching in the Life are thus often related to Wilfrid's involvement with the secular world. His audience at councils or at court was often a royal one. Stephanus remembered Wilfrid as a teacher of kings and queens. With Aethelthryth, Wilfrid was able to establish himself as a friendly mentor of a reigning queen.¹⁴⁹ It was through his teaching that she was persuaded to take up the religious life. Wilfrid was also celebrated for teaching Caedwalla whilst he was involved in the evangelisation of Sussex.¹⁵⁰ During the course of this evangelisation the king of Sussex, Aethilwalh, received a sermon from Wilfrid which taught him some central Christian doctrines.¹⁵¹

Stephanus showed that great advantage could be gained by kings who obeyed Wilfrid's teachings. Whilst Egfrith obeyed Wilfrid, the result was peace among the people and victory against enemies. The Picts and Mercians could be defeated because the king trusted in God and the bishop.¹⁵² Similarly Caedwalla's success as a warlord was directly related to his subservience to the teaching of Wilfrid.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ VW 19, 22.

¹⁵⁰ VW 42; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Saint Wilfrid in Sussex', in Studies in Sussex Church History, ed. M.J. Kitch (London, 1981), pp.1-17.

¹⁵¹ VW 41.

¹⁵² VW 19-20.

¹⁵³ VW 42.

Disobedience, however, immediately reversed a king's fortunes. Egfrith's hostility to Wilfrid led him to suffer defeat at the hands of the Picts and his queen, Iurminburg became possessed by a devil. She was only healed when Wilfrid was released.¹⁵⁴ Stephanus also directly attributed the death of Aldfrith to his hostility towards Wilfrid's devotion to the customs and laws of the Apostolic see. Towards the end of his Life, Stephanus narrated how Aldfrith received a message from Badwini, a priest and abbot, and Alfrith a teacher which sent greetings from Wilfrid and demanded an audience with the king. The king's obduracy led him to vow never to change his mind as a result of documents sent from Rome but to remain guided by the original decisions of the archbishop and his counsellors. As a result Aldfrith was divinely punished through sickness and although he confessed that he had acted wrongly towards Wilfrid he nevertheless died.¹⁵⁵

Wilfrid's role as a teacher to those who had undertaken some form of religious life was also public. He exhorted his companions publicly and formally to bear persecution. Whilst in prison, he healed the wife of a reeve who was suffering from palsy and she became an abbess named Aebbe.¹⁵⁶ Stephanus was not forthcoming about whether this abbess was the abbess of Coldingham but he later recounted how Aebbe who was the sister of King Oswiu and abbess of Coldingham had clearly been influenced by Wilfrid's teaching. She was able to provide Egfrith with an explanation concerning the queen's sickness and related it to Wilfrid's

¹⁵⁴ VW 24, 33-4, 39.

¹⁵⁵ VW 58-9.

¹⁵⁶ VW 35, 37.

banishment and the king's refusal to obey the writings of the Apostolic see.¹⁵⁷

Stephanus wrote of Wilfrid's communities in a public dimension. The final chapters of the Life focus upon these communities and the impact of Wilfrid's teaching upon them. The emphasis is primarily upon the disposal of property and treasure. Wilfrid instructed the brethren to divide his wealth into four parts. One part was to be sent to Rome. The others were to be given to the poor, to the abbots so as to enable them to purchase the friendship of kings and bishops and to those who had laboured with him but had received no lands or estates. The community at Ripon was exhorted to keep its rule of life.¹⁵⁸ Stephanus did not depict Wilfrid as a private confessor figure to whom people came for advice in the manner in which Bede had conceived a number of monastic bishops and the anonymous monk had portrayed Cuthbert. He showed how episcopal and abbatial authority required more than the cultivation of ascetic virtue and withdrawal into reflection and solitude. It required willing subordination to established ecclesiastical tradition. In behaving in this manner Wilfrid was shown to be influenced by the conduct of seventh-century popes and Gallic bishops.

The seventh-century popes were noted for their allegiance to established canons and their desire to regulate church discipline. This was particularly the case with regard to the Greek speaking immigrants who occupied the papal throne, John IV and Theodore. They had come to Rome in opposition to the growing imperial support for schismatics and through councils and an appeal to canonical tradition they

¹⁵⁷ VW 39.

¹⁵⁸ VW 62-4.

waged ideological warfare against the emperor. John IV condemned Monotheletism through the convocation of a synod. Theodore who succeeded John in 642 refused to acknowledge the appointment of a new patriarch when Pyrrhus who had fallen into imperial disfavour was driven out from Constantinople. Theodore claimed that Pyrrhus would have to be found guilty of a canonical offence by a synod.¹⁵⁹ The position of the papacy during this period was parallel to Wilfrid's position as it was described by Stephanus. The papacy, like Wilfrid, appealed to canonical tradition to counter the hostility of secular enemies. Gaul, another central place within Stephanus' *Life*, also possessed a strong tradition of canon law. Mordek has argued that the *Collectio Vetus Gallica*, a systematic collection of canon law, was compiled in Lyons. Lowe has examined Lyons' scriptoria and shown how it produced a large number of documents concerned with canon law.¹⁶⁰ The first *Passio* of Leudegar recorded how the saint was educated by his uncle, Dido, bishop of Poitiers and was especially learned in both secular and canon law.¹⁶¹ A high profile is similarly assigned to law in the *Passio Praejecti*. Praejectus was well acquainted with legal procedure and practice. He appealed to canon law and sought royal documents to

¹⁵⁹ J. Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages 476-752* (London, 1979), pp.183-86.

¹⁶⁰ H. Mordek, *Kirchenrecht und Reform im Frankenreich: die 'Collectio Vetus Gallica', die älteste systematische Kanonessammlung des Frankischen Gallien, Studien und Edition, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 1* (Berlin, 1975); E.A. Lowe, *Codices Lugdunenses Antiquissimi: le scriptorium de Lyon, la plus ancienne école calligraphique de France* (Lyon, 1924), p.17.

¹⁶¹ *Passio Leudegarii* I 1, MGH SRM 5, pp.283-84.

support his appointment to the see of Clermont.¹⁶²

The portrayal of Wilfrid as a persecuted apostle was one means by which Stephanus explored Wilfrid's religious convictions and the exercise of his episcopal office. A further motif which is evident within Stephanus' portrayal is that of Wilfrid as a powerful father figure who wields protective power. It is this image of Wilfrid with its emphasis upon power and largesse which has had the most enduring impact on historians. Wilfrid's ability to exercise his fatherly piety and power arose paradoxically from the fact that he himself had been humble and obedient to his own father. In his early years he had 'ministered skilfully and humbly to all who came to his father's house.'¹⁶³ He had also submitted to Dalfinus as his spiritual father at Lyons.¹⁶⁴ This attitude of humility and obedience was to continue in his submission to the will of God as Father. This was an attitude which mirrored that of Christ himself. Pauline theology again provided a model which Stephanus could utilise in order to present Wilfrid as a father figure. Paul believed that his apostolic status was derived not only from his earthly sufferings but also through his election by God to the role of spiritual father. In writing to the Corinthians he had stated 'in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.'¹⁶⁵

Wilfrid's fatherly role expressed itself in teaching but also in the giving of alms to widows and orphans, the building and decoration of churches and concern

¹⁶² Passio Praejecti 13-14, MGH SRM 5, pp.232-34.

¹⁶³ VW 2.

¹⁶⁴ VW 4,6.

¹⁶⁵ I Corinthians 4:15.

over the welfare and control of his monasteries and churches. Wilfrid was concerned with protection. He taught Egfrith to guard his land and defend churches.¹⁶⁶ He had acted as a guardian to King Dagobert II of Austrasia in the king's youth. The king, like Wilfrid, had suffered banishment and exile and had come to Ireland for help. Wilfrid had invited him across to England and furnished him with weapons and companions. He had equipped Dagobert with the qualities which he himself was to possess enabling the king to act as a counsellor of elders and defender of churches.¹⁶⁷ Wilfrid's role as protective father also extended to his adoption of the young Northumbrian king, Osred as his son towards the end of the life.¹⁶⁸

This protective role was not always marked by gentleness. It could also be expressed with a great deal of force by the bishop. In chapter eighteen of the Life Stephanus described one of the miracles worked by Wilfrid. Wilfrid was out riding fulfilling the various duties of his bishopric when he met a woman grieving over her dead son. The woman pleaded that Wilfrid might raise the child back to life, baptise him and accept him as one of his followers. Wilfrid performed the operation by placing his hand on the dead body and then instructed the woman to give the child back to him at the age of seven to enter the religious life. The woman, however, fled. Wilfrid was not prepared to allow the boy to escape his fatherly clutches. He instructed his reeve to forcibly bring the boy to him where he was given the surname 'Filius Episcopi', Bishop's Son, and served God at Ripon until he died of plague.

¹⁶⁶ VW 20.

¹⁶⁷ VW 28, 33.

¹⁶⁸ VW 59.

This episode illustrates how Stephanus conceived that the spiritual relationship of father and son involved great responsibilities and sacrifice. The relationship was not an easy one to enter into or to maintain. It was designed by Stephanus to recall and duplicate the relationship between the believer and God. God conferred blessings upon the believer, he gave the gifts of natural and spiritual life. However, he also made demands and required disciplined submission to his will.

There were a number of texts which could have influenced Stephanus' presentation of Wilfrid's fatherly power. The bishop's role was notably perceived in a fatherly perspective in Gaul. Bishops had been powerful figures within Gallic society since the collapse of Roman rule.¹⁶⁹ They had taken it upon themselves to undertake duties which had characteristically been carried out by secular authorities. Gallic bishops cared for the physical and spiritual welfare of those committed to their charge. They acted as mediators and settled disputes. Sidonius Apollinaris recounted how Patiens a fifth century archbishop of Lyons distributed supplies of corn at his own expense throughout the Auvergne during a famine.¹⁷⁰ Gregory of Tours protected his citizens from the king's tax collectors.¹⁷¹ When Gregory had arrived in Tours in 573, Venantius Fortunatus had greeted him with an *adventus* poem composed on behalf of the people of the city. In this he was hailed as *plebis pater*

¹⁶⁹ F. Prinz, 'Die biscöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift* 217 (1973), pp.1-35; J. Durliat, 'Les Attributions civiles des évêques mérovingiens: L'exemple de Didier évêque de Cahors (630-655)', *Annales du Midi* 91 (1979), pp.237-54.

¹⁷⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae* VI.12, ed. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp.276-85.

¹⁷¹ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* IX.30, MGH SRM 1, pp.384-85.

and a loving shepherd of his flock.¹⁷² Elsewhere Fortunatus praised Gregory as *pater populi* and *pater patriae* and described Germanus of Paris as *pater et pastor populi*.¹⁷³ In Fortunatus' poems addressed to and concerning bishops, episcopal figures are shown to care for travellers and all those in need.¹⁷⁴ In an encomium addressed to Felix of Nantes on his *festiva dies*, Fortunatus praised the bishop for the care and protection he showed to his people, his justice and his *Romanitas*.¹⁷⁵ Heinzelmann has investigated episcopal epitaphs composed in Gaul from the fourth to the seventh centuries.¹⁷⁶ These give details of the careers of bishops noting the noble backgrounds of the bishops and their families. From the fifth century they show a particular concern for the fact that an episcopal career was often concluded by a description of the late bishop's self-denial and asceticism. Heinzelmann's study has indicated that the dominant terms used to describe the bishops in these epitaphs use the metaphor of father. Phrases such as *pater pietate* and *pater populi* frequently appear.¹⁷⁷ Other episcopal virtues possessed by these bishops are shown to have had their roots in the exercise of this fatherly piety. Cronopius of Périgueux was credited

¹⁷² Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 5.3, ed. F. Leo, MGH AA 4.1.

¹⁷³ Fortunatus *Opera Poetica* 10.12a.8, 8.16.3; *Vita Germani parisiaci* 76, MGH SRM 7, p.417.

¹⁷⁴ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 3.3.19-20, 3.13.29-32, 3.15.15-20, 4.3, 4.7.13-14, 4.8.17-26, 5.15, 5.18.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.8.

¹⁷⁶ M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien* (Beihefte der Francia, 5. Munich, 1976).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.152-58, 191-211, 239.

with the ransoming of prisoners and the repopulation of his city.¹⁷⁸ Desiderius of Cahors constructed walls and oversaw the building of aqueducts.¹⁷⁹ Caesarius of Arles had supplied the poor and captives with assistance, opened a hospital near the cathedral to care for the sick and increased the wealth available to the church.¹⁸⁰

The Acta Aunemundi not only provided Stephanus with a model which taught the necessity of persecution in shaping episcopal sanctity, but also showed that Aunemundus' episcopate had been characterised by fatherly piety. Like Wilfrid, Aunemundus moved in a royal circle. This led him to perform an activity which was also performed by Wilfrid, to assume an advisory role in relation to young kings. Just as Wilfrid had adopted the young king Osred as his son, Aunemundus acted as godfather to Clothar III. Another bishop, Eligius of Noyon, also became the young king's godfather.¹⁸¹ Aunemundus' assumption of this role ensured that he acquired power and influence. He was granted whatever he sought. However, his adoption of such a role also meant that he aroused envy and led to his persecution and eventual death. Aunemundus' contact with the secular world was not considered to have compromised the exercise of his office. Before his martyrdom, his clergy and the populace reminded him of his fatherly piety responding with one voice, 'Never good pastor have you been unpleasant to us, nor have you seized anything from us by force. Indeed from the last to the greatest of us we reckon that we have been raised

¹⁷⁸ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 4.8.23-4.

¹⁷⁹ Desiderius, Epistolae 13, PL 87, col.255.

¹⁸⁰ Vita Caesarii I.20, MGH SRM 3, p.164.

¹⁸¹ Acta Aunemundi 2, 8, pp. 694-5; Vita Eligii II.32, MGH SRM 4, pp.717-18.

up and enriched by your gifts.¹⁸²

Emphasis upon the exercise of fatherly piety in the execution of episcopal office was also found in a papal context in the Liber Pontificalis. Pope Honorius I had turned his mansion near the Lateran into a monastery and had taken an active interest in affairs in Anglo-Saxon England. He had congratulated Edwin of Northumbria on his conversion, granted the pallium to the archbishops of Canterbury and York and dispatched Birinus to evangelise the West Saxons.¹⁸³ He was noted for his efficient management of papal funds. He carried out an extensive building programme, repairing and embellishing churches in Rome. The most notable aspect of this programme was the complete restoration of St Peter's. He covered its roof with bronze and decorated Peter's tomb and the church's door with silver. He also shouldered responsibilities for maintenance of the corn supply and the restoration of aqueducts.¹⁸⁴

The Liber Pontificalis emphasised that many seventh-century popes were generous both to the laity and to their clergy. Severinus was praised for his charitable actions. He raised the stipends of secular clergy and granted them a year's full pay when he died.¹⁸⁵ Boniface V formally confirmed the right of asylum in churches, distributed his personal fortune in alms and completed the building of the cemetery of St. Nicomedes. He also had taken an active interest in the Anglo-Saxon

¹⁸² Acta Aunemundi 6, p.695.

¹⁸³ HE II.17-19; III.7.

¹⁸⁴ Liber Pontificalis I, pp.323-7.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.328.

conversion. He had written to Mellitus, archbishop of Canterbury and to Justus, bishop of Rochester as well as to Edwin of Northumbria and his consort Ethelburga.¹⁸⁶ Theodore I was primarily noted for his role in Christological disputes but he was also generous to the poor and undertook a modest building programme.¹⁸⁷ Vitalian, who had consecrated Theodore of Tarsus as archbishop of Canterbury, built upon foundations laid by Gregory the Great by developing the song school at the Lateran.¹⁸⁸

The parallels between Wilfrid's episcopate and the lives of these popes are striking. Like Honorius, Wilfrid was a monk-bishop who showed a strong interest in the building and reconstruction of churches. He was noted for his generosity to both laity and clergy. Before his death he divided his treasure into four parts granting it to the poor, his clergy and the churches of St Mary and St Paul in Rome. He protected his followers and developed use of the Roman chant in his churches.¹⁸⁹ It thus seems clear that Stephanus found a model for Wilfrid's exercise of fatherly piety as a bishop not only in Gaul but also in Rome.

The Vita Wilfridi and its Audience

It has been shown how Stephanus intended his text to function as a theological document. Wilfrid was shown to act in accordance with an ideal of sanctity which

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.330; HE I.7-8; II.10-11.

¹⁸⁷ Liber Pontificalis I, pp.331-5.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.343-5; HE III.29.

¹⁸⁹ VW 8, 11, 16-17, 21-2, 63.

stressed how earthly sufferings led to eventual glorification and exaltation. It is necessary to consider the audience for whom Stephanus composed his work and to whom he directed his ideas. It is possible that the text may have been directed at a variety of different audiences. It operated on a number of different levels in accordance with the sophistication and intellectual training of these audiences. Firstly, it is clear that Stephanus' work belonged to a clerical milieu and was directed at a clerical audience. It was composed in a monastic environment and designed to serve as edifying material for the occupants of Wilfrid's monastic foundations. It could have served as private devotional material but it also served as a means of public advertisement. It was designed to promote and sustain the cult of Wilfrid in his monastic foundations as is clear from its emphasis upon Wilfrid's continual intercession in the life of these communities. It was a text which was designed to be read out in a monastic refectory. This seems evident through its stress that a private mass was to be celebrated for Wilfrid every day and that Thursday, the day on which he died, was to be celebrated as a feast day as though it were a Sunday.¹⁹⁰ One function which was achieved through the recitation of the text to a monastic audience was that of reminding the churches established by Wilfrid of the lands and treasures they had come to possess as a result of the sanctity of the saint.¹⁹¹

However, the text also possessed a more explicitly religious function as has been emphasised. Through its focus on the conduct and activity of an ideal bishop it could serve as a manual and guide to the episcopate. Its stress upon an ideal of

¹⁹⁰ VW 65.

¹⁹¹ Rollason, Saints and Relics, p.111.

episcopal sanctity marked by the patient endurance of suffering could have particularly appealed to Acca since Acca's life was to follow a similar course to that of Wilfrid when he was expelled from his see in 731.¹⁹² Acca's intellectual credentials would have enabled him to appreciate the full depth of the sophisticated theological ideas embodied in the text which he himself had inspired. He may have commissioned the work to complement his commissioning of Bede's commentaries. Teaching his own clergy with Bede's commentaries, he could use Stephanus' Life to show how some of the central themes of the commentaries were embodied in the life of a saint. Since it is clear from Bede's criticisms voiced in the Letter to Egbert that by no means all the clergy were marked by a high level of latinity it would appear that the full depth of the text's theological convictions would only be understood by a few.¹⁹³ In addressing a clerical audience, the text was directed at a cultural elite. Although a large number of the occupants of religious houses also belonged to a social elite, it is possible that some were of lower social status such as the boy Eodwald who Wilfrid had healed.¹⁹⁴

The text must also be understood as a document which was intended to reach a lay audience. On one level this audience would have been composed of a social elite, the nobility, since the language of the laity in England was not Latin based and both laymen and clerics were accustomed to learn Latin as a foreign tongue. Since Anglo-Saxon England did not possess a class of secular literate men comparable to

¹⁹² HE Continuations from the Moore MS., pp.572-3.

¹⁹³ Bede, Epistola ad Egbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.408-9.

¹⁹⁴ VW 18.

the *filid* in Ireland¹⁹⁵ only a handful of kings and nobles would have been acquainted with Latin such as Aldfrith who figures prominently in Stephanus' text. Aldfrith was said to have given abbot Ceolfrith eight hides of land in exchange for a text of the Cosmographers which Benedict Biscop had brought back with him from Rome.¹⁹⁶ He was also the patron of Aldhelm's *Epistola ad Acircium*.¹⁹⁷ The evidence that Stephanus intended to direct his text to an aristocratic lay elite is found through the inclusion of secular, aristocratic values in its portrayal of Wilfrid.

Patrick Wormald has shown how the manner in which the Anglo-Saxon warrior nobility threw its traditions, customs and tastes into the articulation of its new faith finds expression in texts such as *Beowulf* and Felix's *Life of Saint Guthlac*.¹⁹⁸ He has commented that Wilfrid's life retained much of the flavour of that of a Germanic warlord.¹⁹⁹ Emphasis upon the presence of secular values in the *Life* should not, however, undermine the text's fundamental status as a theological

¹⁹⁵ D.N. Dumville, 'Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists', in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp.72-104 at pp.102-4; J. Stevenson, 'Literacy in Ireland: the evidence of the Patrick dossier in the Book of Armagh', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp.11-35.

¹⁹⁶ P. Wormald, 'The uses of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its neighbours', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series 27 (1977), pp.95-114; S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp.36-62; D.N. Dumville, 'Beowulf and the Celtic world: the uses of evidence', *Traditio* 37 (1981), pp.110-20. On Aldfrith's literacy see *HE* III.15; IV.26; *HA* 15.

¹⁹⁷ Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, ed. Ehwald, p.61.

¹⁹⁸ P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy', in *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. R. T. Farrell (British Archaeological Reports 46; Oxford, 1978), pp.32-95.

¹⁹⁹ *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. J. Campbell, p.83.

document. Stephanus put Wilfrid forward as a model for lay aristocrats but in so doing he did not intend to offer them licence to justify secular ways which were sordid and unedifying. Stephanus attempted to show how Wilfrid was able to channel secular values into an exemplary pattern of Christian living.

The presence of secular values in Stephanus' text links it to the hagiographical genre concerned with the Life of the 'noble saint', the *Adelsheilige*.²⁰⁰ These saints Lives are permeated with the values of the aristocracy and came to dominate seventh- and eighth- century Merovingian hagiography. The term *militia Christi* had been applied to saints elsewhere in the context of their struggle with demons as they lived the ascetic life. However, in the texts depicting the 'noble saint' war is present not only as a metaphor but also as a social reality. In the Vita Arnulfi written in the early eighth century, Arnulf of Metz's prowess as a noble warrior was celebrated.²⁰¹ However, in contrast to this text which records Arnulf's abilities as a warrior before he became bishop, Stephanus showed that Wilfrid did not desist from acting as a warrior once he had acquired episcopal status. At the beginning of the Life, Stephanus showed how Wilfrid obtained *arma et equos* for himself and his followers.²⁰² The description of Wilfrid's victory over South Saxon paganism

²⁰⁰ F. Irsigler, 'On the aristocratic character of early Frankish society', trans. T. Reuter in The Medieval Nobility (Amsterdam, New York, Oxford, 1979), p.117; K. Bosl, 'Der Adelsheilige. Idealtypus und Wirklichkeit, Gesellschaft und Kultur im Merowingerzeitlichen Bayern des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts', in Speculum historiale. Festschrift für Johannes Spörl, eds. L. Boehm et al. (Freiburg-Munich, 1965), pp.167-87; G. Scheibelreiter, 'Der frühfränkische Episkopat. Bild und Wirklichkeit', Frühmittelalterliche Studien 17 (1983), pp.131-47.

²⁰¹ Vita Arnulfi 4, MGH SRM 2, p.433.

²⁰² VW 2.

achieved when he was returning from his consecration is a clear example of Stephanus' absorption of warrior culture. Wilfrid had also supplied Dagobert with arms and his devotion to his followers mirrored the secular ideal of how a lord was to remain faithful to his *comitatus*.²⁰³

Through his portrayal of Wilfrid's adoption of warrior culture Stephanus attempted to convince a lay audience that military activity was intended to overcome paganism and superstition. He may also have intended to teach the text's clerical audience that force could serve a legitimate purpose. The use of warrior culture by Stephanus could appeal to an aristocracy still involved in undergoing the process of transition from paganism to Christianity. Alternatively it could have been a means by which Stephanus was able to preach to the converted in terms which they themselves could more readily understand.

Due to the nature of literacy in early Anglo-Saxon England, saints cults have been deemed to be prominently derived from and directed towards the activities of an aristocratic elite.²⁰⁴ It is clear that like Bede's writings, Stephanus' text belonged among an elite circle of ecclesiastics and nobles. However, it is possible that although Wilfrid's cult was managed by an elite it also derived its importance from a more widely diffused appeal. Since clerical culture was stamped by oral and symbolic ways of thinking the written word could extend beyond those who could

²⁰³ VW 13, 28; Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background', p.17.

²⁰⁴ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, ch. 4.

read and write.²⁰⁵ Documents operated in a world characterised by highly visible rituals. Clerical figures would be called upon by the laity to produce charters which would be handed over at a public ceremony.²⁰⁶ These ceremonies involved activities such as the placing of a sod of earth from the estate granted in the charter onto an altar or gospel book or the addition of the witness list to the text of the charter.²⁰⁷ Stephanus' text must be considered in relation to these highly visual ceremonies since it was in this context that it could have reached a wider audience.

Stephanus had legitimised an oral tradition by enshrining it within the written word. Wilfrid himself was said to have 'narrated from memory the whole story of his life to the priest Tatberht his kinsman on a certain day as they were riding along together.'²⁰⁸ Since Wilfrid's teachings had originally been transmitted orally they thus became a disembodied *confessio* reaching an audience over which Stephanus would only have had partial control. Wilfrid was specifically praised as a pastor who directed his energies beyond an aristocratic elite. He cared for the poor, protected

²⁰⁵ J.M.H. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany, c.850-1250', *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp.309-12; B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983); *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. Goody (Cambridge, 1968); Id., *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Literacy* (Cambridge, 1986); Id., *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987); M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London, 1979); *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990); W.J. Ong, 'Orality, Literacy and Medieval Textualisation', *New Literary History* 16 (1984), pp.1-12.

²⁰⁶ Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', pp.44-5.

²⁰⁷ S nos. 1164, 1258; P. Chaplais, 'Some early Anglo-Saxon diplomas on single sheets: originals or copies?', in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. F. Ranger (London, 1973), pp.83-4.

²⁰⁸ *VW* 65.

widows and orphans and took in strangers. At Ripon he preached a sermon to an audience which did not merely include kings and he ordered the gospels to be written out in gold on purple parchment. A jewelled case was constructed to house this book.²⁰⁹ Stephanus' stress upon Wilfrid's participation in public ceremonies and concern about the need for the Christian faith to be expressed through physical objects link Wilfrid to the ordinary laity. Ian Wood has suggested that the Franks Casket could have emerged from the same cultural milieu as Stephanus' Life.²¹⁰ Both the Vita Wilfridi and the Franks Casket utilised Germanic elements in a Christian context. Wood's hypothesis further suggests that Stephanus' text interacted with visual modes of communication.

The image which Eddius Stephanus created of Wilfrid has primarily been examined horizontally in terms of Wilfrid's relationship with the world of men and his involvement in Northumbrian politics. It is also necessary to examine Stephanus' image of Wilfrid vertically in terms of the saint's relationship with God and the theological ideas which the Life conveys. Stephanus found the model through which he interpreted Wilfrid's episcopal sanctity in Rome and Gaul. He emphasised Wilfrid's apostolic status and illustrated how his episcopal authority derived its impact from the effects of suffering and persecution. Wilfrid's imitation of Christ was shown to follow the views of certain New Testament writers who had associated Christlikeness with the suffering of persecution, scorn and mockery. He acquired his

²⁰⁹ VW 11, 17.

²¹⁰ I.N. Wood, 'Ripon, Francia and the Franks Casket in the Early Middle Ages', Northern History 26 (1990), pp.1-19.

status as a bishop through his devotion to the apostolic teaching of the see of Rome. This devotion and obedience enabled him to act as a powerful father figure protecting and providing for his kinsmen and able to withstand his enemies. Stephanus' conception of the nature of episcopal sanctity and authority differed from that of other Anglo-Saxon hagiographers. Bede and the anonymous monk who had composed the Life of Cuthbert had not written of bishops who suffered persecution. They had located episcopal sanctity in acts of ascetic withdrawal into solitude and study. Such acts equipped the bishop to preach and exercise pastoral functions. Also paradoxically through withdrawal into solitude these bishops won the affections of the crowd. In contrast, Stephanus showed that Wilfrid was like the apostles, prophets and martyrs who had met with derision, scorn and even death at the hands of the crowd.

The image of Wilfrid created by Stephanus was aimed at a small circle of clergy for whom it served as a manual and guide to the episcopate and a means by which the ideas embodied in Bede's biblical commentaries could be related to the life of a saint. Stephanus was also able to utilise Germanic values to direct his portrayal of Wilfrid's episcopal sanctity to an aristocratic lay audience. Furthermore through its relationship to oral culture and connection with physical objects, the image could reach a wider audience. Stephanus' conception of episcopal sanctity has not endeared itself to modern historians. Neither Wilfrid nor his hagiographer were men of peace. They were sombre warriors. This does not mean, however, that they were not concerned with holiness but rather that they recognised that holiness involved the need to bear persecution, to struggle and to fight. Stephanus' construction of a portrait of Wilfrid's episcopal authority in the Life of Wilfrid must overshadow in

importance the question of the historical accuracy of the Life. Stephanus' Wilfrid was an idealised figure. He was a means by which a particular image of spiritual power and episcopal authority could be articulated. Above all he served to convey the message that 'blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised for those who love him.'²¹¹

Although Stephanus' depiction of Wilfrid's episcopal authority in the Vita Wilfridi differed in certain key aspects from Bede's conception of authority, it contained a number of notable similarities to the image of episcopal authority found in the writings of Alcuin dealing with the lives and careers of early Anglo-Saxon bishops. Both Stephanus and Alcuin viewed the bishop as a pious benefactor: loyal to his flock and building up the material status of the Church through acts of patronage resulting in the bestowal of wealth, splendour and treasures to the Church and individuals. In order to complete the study of images of episcopal authority created by churchmen outside the ranks of the episcopate itself, it is thus necessary to turn to Alcuin, a scholar nurtured in a cathedral church. His conception of episcopal authority forms the subject of the next chapter.

²¹¹ James 1:12.

CHAPTER FIVE.

THE BISHOP AS BENEFACTOR AND CIVIC PATRON. ALCUIN, YORK AND EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY

In 796 the abbey of St Martin's at Tours acquired a new abbot. The brethren soon began to complain about his habit of attracting unwelcome English tourists. They were said to have cried, 'O God deliver this monastery from these Britishers who come swarming round this countryman of theirs like bees returning to a mother bee.'¹ The abbot was Alcuin: scholar, teacher and moving spirit behind the Carolingian Renaissance. The words of the brethren are a fitting reminder that Alcuin belonged to two worlds: the world of the Carolingian court and the world from which he had come, the school of York. Alcuin had left York in his mid forties in 781 but York had not left him. Peter Godman has emphasised that his 'concern for his patria was not restricted to any one period of his literary output.'² He sent correspondence to Northumbria and to other areas of Anglo-Saxon England and returned to England twice, in 786 with the legatine mission, and in 790-93. Alcuin's intellectual standing was high and owed much to the influence he had developed at the Carolingian court. He was thus a figure to whom the Anglo-Saxon clergy looked for inspiration and example. Although never advancing beyond deacon's orders, he formulated perceptions about the role, function and spiritual authority of bishops in the land he had left. These images are found in his poem praising the see of York

¹ *Vita Alcuini*, 18, ed. W. Arndt, MGH SS 15.1, p.193. On Alcuin as abbot of St Martin's see J. Chélini, 'Alcuin, Charlemagne, et Saint Martin de Tours', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 47 (1961), pp.19-50.

² Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*, ed. P. Godman (Oxford, 1982), p.xliii. (Hereafter *BKSY*).

and its school and in his correspondence.

Alcuin generated images of episcopal authority which both praised holy men and sought to create them. He spent the last years of his life writing letters and little more than one-eighth of his correspondence antedates his last ten years. In his correspondence, Alcuin wrote as an outsider looking back to a world to which he had once belonged but his letters serve to reveal his continued concern for the state of the late eighth- and early ninth-century English Church. These letters have been used as sources for those exploring the reign of Offa of Mercia and the early Viking raids but analysis of the manner in which they reveal a concern for the conduct and role of the episcopate has generally been rather meagre.³ However, of all the Anglo-Saxon recipients of Alcuin's correspondence, bishops and archbishops outnumber monks, nobles and kings. Alcuin's letters to the episcopal hierarchy chiefly addressed three figures: Archbishop Aethelheard of Canterbury, Archbishop Eanbald II of York and Bishop Higbald of Lindisfarne. He also wrote to the sees of Hexham, Winchester, Elmham and Dunwich. Letters addressed to figures other than bishops may also be used to discern his attitude towards episcopal office. His correspondence also serves to throw light upon the concerns of his York poem and is inextricably connected to it as will become evident.

In a series of moral and hortatory letters, Alcuin sought to encourage the

³ For a sample of the literature see P. Wormald, 'The Age of Offa and Alcuin', in The Anglo-Saxons, ed. J. Campbell (Oxford, 1982), pp.101-28; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent (Oxford, 1971), pp.98-123; D.P. Kirby, The Earliest English Kings (London, 1992), pp.142-184. Earlier biographies of Alcuin contain more general material on his correspondence C.J.B. Gaskoin, Alcuin: His Life and His Work (London, 1904); G.F. Browne, Alcuin of York (London, 1908); E.S. Duckett, Alcuin, Friend of Charlemagne: His World and His Work (New York, 1951).

reform of the life of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. He was concerned that bishops should adequately fulfil the nature of their office and he clearly made the bishop responsible for every aspect of church life. Bishops were presented at the apex of the pyramid of ecclesiastical responsibility, endowed with authority over clergy and *monasteria*, and also possessing their own personal obligations of diocesan visitation, preaching and the presentation of a model of righteous living to others. In a letter to King Aethelred of Northumbria bishops were shown to be responsible for every aspect of church life.

it is the duty of bishops to correct monasteries, to direct the lives of the servants of God, to preach the word of God to the people and diligently instruct the common people in their charge.⁴

Writing to Archbishop Eanbald II of York who had been elected to serve the see in 796, Alcuin exhorted him to be 'true to your title and be the overseer of yourself as well as of the flock entrusted to you.'⁵ Similarly in a letter written to Aethelheard soon after he became archbishop of Canterbury in 792, Alcuin defined the figure of the bishop as 'the envoy of the Lord God...a watchman, put in the highest place; so he is called "bishop" meaning "overseer"'.⁶ The bishop was thus defined in relation to the rest of the Christian community. His was seen to be the

⁴ Dümmler, no. 18, pp.49-53, at p.52. Trans. S. Allot, *Alcuin of York* (York, 1974), p.22. 'Episcoporum est monasteria corrigere, servorum Dei vitam disponere, populo Dei verbum praedicare et diligenter plebem erudire subiectam.'

⁵ Dümmler, no.116, p.171. Trans S. Allot, *Alcuin of York*, p.10. 'Ideo secundum pronomen tuum esto superspeculator non solum gregis tibi comissi, sed etiam tui ipsius...'

⁶ Dümmler, no. 17, pp.45-49, at p.46. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.62. 'Memor esto, quod sacerdos angelus domini Dei...Speculator quoque est in excelsissimo positus loco: unde et episcopus dicitur, quasi superspeculator...'

central ecclesiastical office.

Bishops are the lights of the holy church of God, the leaders of the flock of Christ. They must boldly raise the standard of the holy cross in the front line and stand without fear before every attack of the enemy.⁷

In a further letter to Eanbald II of York, Alcuin continued to develop the theme that bishops stood at the head of the Christian community through the use of military metaphors describing the bishops's relationship to the church in a manner akin to that of a general's relationship with an army.⁸ He also emphasised the figure of the bishop as a shepherd in a letter written to Aethelheard exhorting the archbishop not to ignore his people 'lest without their shepherd the flock run away through the thorns of sin.'⁹

Alcuin's York Poem: The Insular Background and Concerns

Alcuin's Versus de Patribus Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae probably reached its final form during one of his return visits to England from the continent perhaps as late as 792/3.¹⁰ As a text belonging to the late eighth century, composed after the reforming synod of Clofesho had established some form of territorial organisation within the diocese based upon episcopal authority and priestly office, it

⁷ Ibid. 'Isti sunt, id est sacerdotes, luminaria sanctae Dei ecclesiae, ductores gregis Christi. Isti in prima acie vexillum sanctae crucis non segniter sublevare debent et ad omnem impetum hostilis exercitus intrepidi stare.'

⁸ Dümmler, no.232, pp.376-78.

⁹ Dümmler, no. 230, pp.364-75, at p.375. Trans. Allott, Alcuin of York, p.67. '...ne grex sine pastore per spineta vitiorum corruens erret...'

¹⁰ BKS, pp.xxxix-xlvi.

illustrates that episcopal structure had become a firm characteristic of the English Church by this time. Following the literary form known as the *opus geminatum* where a work was composed of two parts, one in prose and the other in verse, it was intended to serve as a rendering of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica in verse. The poem, however, is more than this. Although its account of the early history of the see is heavily indebted to Bede, it is marked by the selectivity of Alcuin's own concerns and its later sections, when it ceased to draw on Bede's work, are a major source for the history of Northumbria in the latter half of the eighth century. The poem is marked by nostalgia and patriotism. In it Alcuin explored and celebrated his intellectual roots. It contains an idiosyncratic and incomplete catalogue of the books in the cathedral library and a lengthy panegyric celebrating the career and achievement of Alcuin's intellectual mentor, Archbishop Aelberht. It is a key text for examining the episcopal structure of the early English Church as it is the only surviving early Anglo-Saxon hagiographical work which deals with the history of a single episcopal see and its cathedral community.

Unlike both Bede and Eddius Stephanus, Alcuin located episcopal sanctity in a bishop's attachment to a place. For him the bishop was primarily the ecclesiastical ruler of a *civitas*. The site of his power lay in the city and he was the benefactor and protector of an urban community. The impressive physical setting of York served to enhance the prestige of bishops by showing off their personal power to the community. Bede and Eddius Stephanus had written about bishops from a monastic perspective. Their texts were composed in monastic communities and imbued with monastic ideals. In contrast Alcuin was a deacon, never a monk, and it has been

observed that 'the milieu in which Alcuin was trained was less a monastic community of reflective scholarship than the cathedral church of a major episcopal see on the rise.'¹¹ This meant that Alcuin's poem recognised more than other works the importance of the relationship between the episcopate and the development of civic consciousness in early Anglo-Saxon England.

In writing of the episcopate Bede had shown little regard for its urban nature. He had written of the activities of individuals who pursued the career of the monk-bishop. For him the monastic life in which bishops continued to move after their election to the episcopate and their attachment to ascetic values had been the focal point at which their holiness was located. Alcuin, however, wrote the history of a single see sited in an old Roman foundation. The background to this portrayal of a single community lay in Bede's Historia Abbatum and the anonymous Vita Ceolfridi which had both used the hagiographical genre to describe the internal orderings of a monastic community and its relationship with the outside world. Alcuin's poem, influenced by these texts, presented an account of an episcopal community. He celebrated the bishops who had made York great and who were themselves made great by its qualities as an episcopal centre providing a selective record of a community's experience under its God given pastors.

Alcuin's focus upon his *patria* in the poem locates York as the chief episcopal centre of the kingdom of Northumbria. This picture of the supremacy acquired by York in the eighth century contrasted significantly with Bede's treatment of the early history of the see. According to D.P. Kirby, 'Bede simply failed to tap any

¹¹ BKSY, p.lxiii.

considerable vein of York tradition.¹² There are places in the Historia Ecclesiastica where York is conspicuous only by its absence. Although Bede recounted the early foundation of the see of York under Paulinus and Edwin he said little about York under the bishops Bosa, John of Beverley and Wilfrid II in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. The material which Bede used concerning John of Beverley's episcopate had come from an oral tradition preserved at Beverley itself rather than York and largely consisted of miracle stories. Although Bede's omissions can be explained through the fact that he was forced to work with inadequate and limited sources it seems unlikely that he would have been unable to gain access to traditions preserved at York since he was in direct personal contact with the see. His reticence to describe the episcopal community in any depth may have been the result of a belief that York had failed to live up to his expectations. This is evident from his account of Bishop Acca. Acca was said to have spent his early days in the see of York. He was 'brought up from childhood with the clergy of the holy Bosa, beloved of God, bishop of York, and was instructed by them.' However, he joined Bishop Wilfrid 'in the hope of finding a better way of life.'¹³ This clearly implies that Bede was aware of York's limitations.

Although Bede was clearly concerned with the early English Church as an episcopal institution, the episcopal hierarchy remained ill-defined in the seventh and

¹² D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the Historia Ecclesiastica', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 48 (1965-66), pp.341-371 at p.356. See further the comment of Kirby in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum: Its Contemporary Setting (Jarrow Lecture, 1992).

¹³ HE V.20.

early eighth centuries. The bishops described by Bede did not on the whole enjoy the assured status that was provided by the leadership of an urban community. Thus Bede had shown that Hild, the powerful abbess of the *monasterium* at Whitby, exercised a considerable influence in seventh century Northumbria. The *monasterium* supplied a number of bishops for the see of York itself and acted almost as the mother church of the Deiran diocese in place of York.¹⁴ By the end of Bede's lifetime York had failed to acquire the twelve suffragans recommended in Gregory the Great's plan for the structure of the English Church. Despite Bede's insistence in the Letter to Egbert that the bishop should attempt to rectify the situation by the creation of new sees his advice was ignored. No new sees were created by Egbert nor by his successors and York achieved metropolitan status without the establishment of new bishoprics. Bede's reticence concerning York may also be explained through the fact that York unlike Lindisfarne was not a monastic see. In urging Egbert to create new bishoprics Bede may have wished to place the new episcopal sees in existing *monasteria* in order to retain the close link between bishop and abbot which existed at Lindisfarne.¹⁵

The community at York in Alcuin's day appears to have mirrored the character of the community at Canterbury. Eighth-century York contained two ecclesiastical foci: the cathedral of St Peter, and a *monasterium*. Aelberht had been

¹⁴ A. T. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp.143, 149-50.

¹⁵ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp.413-14.

educated as a child oblate in a *monasterium*¹⁶ and Wilfrid II 'had been bishop's deputy and abbot at York' before he succeeded John of Beverley as bishop.¹⁷ Here Alcuin differentiated the rule of the abbot from that of the bishop although the two were closely linked. This along with the fact that the York Annals record how in 791 the sons of King Aelfwold were taken by force from York having been 'brought from the principal church' suggests that, as at Canterbury, the *monasterium* and the cathedral church occupied separate sites although they were closely linked.¹⁸ Canterbury possessed a community at Christ Church and the *monasterium* of St Peter and St Paul outside its walls. There is no suggestion that the bishop at either Canterbury or York was ever subject to the abbot as at Lindisfarne. Bede mentioned the *monasterium* at York in the Letter to Egbert where he described how he had spent some days in it for the sake of study.¹⁹ Alcuin wrote to the 'Euboracensis ecclesiae fratribus' and exclaimed 'regularis vitae vos ordinet disciplina'.²⁰ These *fratres* appear to have been a community of clerks rather than monks.²¹ Bede had similarly used the term *fratres* to refer to priests as well as the unordained and Egbert had referred to clerks living in communities when he discussed confession undertaken by

¹⁶ BKS^Y 1417.

¹⁷ BKS^Y 1218.

¹⁸ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. T. Arnold Vol. 2 (RS, London, 1885), p.53; R.K. Morris, 'Alcuin, York and the alma sophia', in The Anglo-Saxon Church, ed. L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (London, 1986), pp.80-90 at p.81.

¹⁹ Bede, Epistola ad Ecgbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, p.405.

²⁰ Dümmler no.42, pp.85-86.

²¹ D.A. Bullough, 'Alcuin and the kingdom of heaven: liturgy, theology and the Carolingian Age', in Id., Carolingian Renewal (Manchester, 1992), p.164, n.13, p.209.

‘clerici in monasteriis’ in his Dialogues.²²

Bosa whom Alcuin described as ‘monachus, praesul, doctor moderatus’²³ was responsible for recommending that the clergy at York should ‘live a life apart from the common people’ and adopt a monastic regime.²⁴ Everything should be shared and no one should ‘claim lands, food, houses, money, clothes or anything as his private property.’²⁵ Here Alcuin appears to have described Bosa’s attempt to organise the York community in a manner akin to the character of the early community at Canterbury. Modelled upon the ideal of the ‘common life’ that Gregory the Great and Augustine had lived with their own clergy, the York community under Bosa was intended to be a community of secular clergy living in accordance with communal ideals. Alcuin related how the community regulated every hour either with a reading or prayer.²⁶ According to the anonymous Ferrières monk who composed the Vita Alcuini no later than 829, this appears in Egbert’s time to have involved the celebration of the office of compline. This serves as one of the earliest records of the celebration of compline in a cathedral served by seculars.²⁷ Alcuin certainly remained influenced by the high standards he had known among the community in York. In 796 he urged Archbishop Eanbald of York to inspire in the

²² HA 18; Egbert, Dialogues HS III, c.16, p.413.

²³ BKS^Y 849.

²⁴ BKS^Y 858.

²⁵ BKS^Y 868-869.

²⁶ BKS^Y 863-864.

²⁷ Vita Alcuini 2, 5, MGH SS 15.1, pp.185-86, 187-88; Bullough, ‘Alcuin and the kingdom of heaven’, p.164.

community a zeal for reading the scriptures, praying and living in moderation.

Do everything decently and in order. Fix a time for reading and hours for prayer. Mass should have its proper time. A wise use of the day is wisdom with God.²⁸

In 797 he wrote to Archbishop Aethelheard of Canterbury urging reform of the Canterbury *familia* in a similar vein and it is arguable that he was attempting to achieve at Canterbury the standards he had known at York.²⁹

Alcuin's concern with the urban nature of the episcopate and with the internal orderings of a cathedral community is in part a reflection of the status York itself had acquired since it had become a metropolitan see in 735. The creation of a northern province established the Northumbrian kingdom as an independent ecclesiastical community and ended Canterbury's sole direction of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Drawing upon its Roman past, which Alcuin's poem emphasises, York had developed commercial contacts housing a colony of Frisian merchants.³⁰ Before Alcuin had established the fame of the library of its cathedral school, Archbishops Egbert and Aelberht had received correspondence from the Anglo-Saxon missionaries Boniface and Lul requesting copies of the works of Bede.³¹ The fact that the city had developed into a notable centre of book production in the eighth century is further

²⁸ Dümmler, no.114, pp.167-70, at p.168. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.8. 'Omnia vestra honeste cum ordine fiant. Tempus statuatur lectioni; et oratio suas habeat horas; et missarum solemnities proprio tempore convenient. Qui diem sapit, Domino sapit.'

²⁹ Dümmler, no.128, pp.189-191; N.P. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984), p.155.

³⁰ Altfrid, *Vita Liutgeri*, I.12, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH SS 2, p.408.

³¹ Tangl, nos. 75, 91, 125, 126, pp.156-158, 206-208, 262-264.

evident from the production of the York Annals, the Dialogues of Egbert and a metrical calendar which records the saints and martyrs venerated at York. The Frisian missionary Liutger was said to have returned home from York in 773 'habens secum copiam librorum.'³²

Alcuin's interest in locating the holiness of bishops in their attachment to the urban traditions of York led him to effectively re-write the early history of Northumbria which had been narrated in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica. In drawing upon Bede's text to compose the first half of his *opus geminatum* he presented a selective view of its account of the conversion process by portraying the conversion of Northumbria from a thoroughly Roman perspective. The opening portrait of York 'first built by Roman hands'³³ sets the scene for a discussion of the chief protagonists involved in bringing Christianity to Alcuin's *patria*. The work of conversion is shown to be the initiative of three figures: Gregory the Great, Paulinus and King Edwin.

In concentrating upon the activities of Gregory the Great, Alcuin could draw upon the cult of Gregory which had been celebrated both in Bede's writings and in a text which is arguably the earliest hagiographical work written in Northumbria, the anonymous Vita Gregorii composed by a monk of Whitby. The anonymous Vita Gregorii had 'enabled a Romanised church to discover its true beginnings in the

³² Egbert, Dialogues HS III, pp.403-13; A. Wilmart ed., 'Un témoin anglo-saxon du calendrier métrique de York', Revue Bénédictine 46 (1934), pp.41-69; Altfrid, Vita Liutgeri I.12, MGH SS 2, p.408.

³³ BKSY 19-20.

missionary aspirations of a Roman pope.³⁴ It portrayed Gregory almost as the exclusive apostle of Northumbria and ignored the impact of Oswald and Bishop Aidan on the early Northumbrian Church. By the time Alcuin came to write his poem the cult of Gregory had become firmly established by means of a canon of the Council of Clofesho of 747 which urged all to keep the birth of Gregory as a festival.³⁵ The metrical calendar of York had also recorded Gregory's feast day. In his correspondence Alcuin acknowledged Gregory as *praedicator noster* more frequently than Augustine of Canterbury.³⁶ The anonymous *Vita Gregorii* had also devoted a considerable amount of its narrative to King Edwin and his relics and the fact that Edwin's head was housed at York³⁷ must have influenced Alcuin's concern to stress the king's role in the conversion along with that of the pope. In recounting Edwin's conversion and his baptism by Paulinus, Alcuin stated, unlike Bede, that the king was 'a native of York'.³⁸ This ensured that Alcuin's account of Edwin's reign was more firmly centred on York and consequently associated Edwin more clearly with Gregory the Great's intention of elevating the city to the status of 'a capital and

³⁴ D.A. Bullough, 'Hagiography as Patriotism: Alcuin's "York Poem" and the Early Northumbrian "Vitae Sanctorum"', in *Hagiographie, Cultures, et Sociétés*, Centre de recherche sur l'antiquité tardive et le haut moyen âge, Université de Paris (Paris, 1981), p.342.

³⁵ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 17, p.368.

³⁶ Dümmler, nos. 13, 124, 125, 128, 129, 255, 279, 291, 293, pp.38-39, 181-184, 189-193, 412-413, 435-436, 449-451.

³⁷ *HE* II.20.

³⁸ *BKSY* 91.

prime see of the Church.³⁹

In Alcuin's poem the conversion of Northumbria was a wholly Romanist affair. Paulinus was described as 'a Roman citizen of high renown'.⁴⁰ Alcuin's concern with York as the political and ecclesiastical capital of Northumbria led him to minimise the impact of Irish traditions upon the Northumbrian Church since the Irish Church knew nothing of a bishop's attachment to civic centres. York was not particularly impressed nor concerned with the Celtic influences on the Northumbrian Church which Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* had illuminated. Whereas Bede had recognised that bishops moulded by the Irish tradition provided the Church in Northumbria with a Christian ideal characterised by simplicity and self-denial, the metrical calendar of York had excluded Aidan and Chad from its list of saints. Alcuin's poem similarly omitted any discussion of Chad's brief role as bishop of York. The instances where Alcuin shifted the focus of his poem away from York and into the wider context of the Northumbrian kingdom as a whole are also marked by a lack of concern to stress the impact of Irish bishops in Christianising the kingdom. Although Aidan appears in the poem, Alcuin was unconcerned with his role as a bishop and mentions nothing about his preaching activities. He appears only in relation to the fact that he prophesied that Oswald's hand would remain incorruptible after his death and his Irish origin is not mentioned.⁴¹ The tensions and divisions in the Northumbrian Church created through the clash of Roman and Celtic ideals find

³⁹ *BKSY* 208.

⁴⁰ *BKSY* 134.

⁴¹ *BKSY* 291-300.

no place in Alcuin's text. There is no discussion of the synod of Whitby and Wilfrid's career is shown to be free from controversy.⁴² Instead of the conflict between Wilfrid and King Egfrith which resulted in the bishop's expulsion from his see, Alcuin concentrated upon Wilfrid's career as a missionary. Unlike his discussion of the later occupants of the see, his account of Wilfrid fails to mention the bishop's interest in building programmes and the restoration of St Peter's recorded in Eddius Stephanus' Vita Wilfridi.⁴³ Given Alcuin's interest in the endowments which bishops made to the see this suggests that he was unacquainted with Stephanus' text.

Cuthbert is the one bishop whom Alcuin treats at length outwith the specifically urban context of the see of York and its cathedral community.⁴⁴ His account places into perspective his lack of interest in the Irish contribution to the Northumbrian Church and conception of the episcopal role. Since he drew so heavily upon Bede's prose and metrical Vitae Sancti Cuthberti, Alcuin could not ignore the fact that Cuthbert was a bishop who had absorbed the ascetic traditions of the Celtic world and combined them with Romanised values. However, his portrayal of Cuthbert contains few biographical details and provides little information about the social and geographical context of Cuthbert's activities. Instead it concentrates primarily on Cuthbert's miracles describing them in lines based on the rubrics to Bede's prose and metrical Vitae. His account is therefore concerned more with Cuthbert's status as a saint and thaumaturge than his role as a bishop. Alcuin's ideal

⁴² BKSY 577-645.

⁴³ See chapter four above.

⁴⁴ BKSY 646-740.

bishops were the scholarly and bookish mentors who had nurtured him in his youth. The poem describes Cuthbert's acts of withdrawal and contemplation on Farne but significantly when it recounts his reluctant acceptance of a bishopric it never states that Cuthbert occupied the see of Lindisfarne. This has the force of heightening Alcuin's urban and Romanist conception of the nature of episcopal office. Cuthbert's inclusion therefore does not invalidate Alcuin's concern to portray the episcopate in a civic context. Furthermore, Cuthbert possessed connections with York. He was named in the metrical calendar of York and in a later text than Alcuin's poem which perhaps preserved an earlier tradition, the Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, it was recorded how he was granted land and consecrated in the city.⁴⁵ Alcuin developed Bede's view of Cuthbert and his cult which had perceived him as 'the great unifier'⁴⁶ capable of uniting both halves of Northumbria. He transcended regional and racial boundaries unlike his predecessors and had successfully combined a life of ascetic simplicity and self-denial with a firm commitment to Rome.

The stress on the miraculous and its relationship to episcopal authority found in the poem is explained by Alcuin's dependence upon the writings of Bede. The only bishops recorded by Alcuin who are shown to be associated with miraculous powers are those who had also been portrayed in connection with miracles in Bede's writings. Alcuin thus recounted how when Wilfrid was struck by illness he had a vision of St Michael and was promised four further years of life. The account of

⁴⁵ Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, 5, in Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. T. Arnold, Vol.1 (RS, London, 1882), p.199.

⁴⁶ R.A. Markus, Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography (Jarrow Lecture, 1975), p.12.

Cuthbert's miracles appears simply as a list and does not distinguish, as Bede had done, between the miracles performed by Cuthbert as a bishop and the miracles performed by the saint prior to his elevation to the episcopate. John of Beverley's miracles are similarly recorded in lines which are adapted directly from Bede's account of his episcopate in the Historia Ecclesiastica⁴⁷. When Alcuin ceased to draw on Bede and wrote about contemporary events he did not associate bishops with the working of miracles. None of the later bishops of York were perceived to possess miraculous powers. The only miracle recorded in the later part of the poem is a vision experienced by a young man in the York community which Alcuin personally witnessed. The youth was struck by an illness and his spirit snatched from his body. He had a vision of the community united together in heaven. Alcuin referred to this miracle in a letter written to the York community promising them of his prayers.⁴⁸ Its purpose appears primarily to have been to remind the community that although Alcuin was absent from them he would eventually be reunited with them in heaven. It further emphasised that Alcuin's poem was concerned not only with the careers of individual bishops but also with the spiritual community which they had fostered and developed.

Alcuin's attitude towards the place of the miraculous in those parts of his poem which did not draw directly upon the Historia Ecclesiastica and Bede's Vitae Cuthberti further relates the poem to the anonymous Vita Ceolfridi and Bede's Historia Abbatum. In these texts the public affairs of the community at Wearmouth

⁴⁷ BKSY 614-645, 685-740, 1085-1209.

⁴⁸ BKSY 1602-1649; Dümmler, no.42, p.86.

and Jarrow are shown to be of more importance than the private careers of individual abbots. As a result miracles do not feature in the lives of the abbots. No miracle was associated with Benedict Biscop's career in the Vita Ceolfridi and the only miracles associated with Ceolfrid in the text occurred after his death.⁴⁹ When Bede came to write his Historia Abbatum after 725 he wrote primarily as a historian rather than a hagiographer and omitted these posthumous miracles from his account.⁵⁰ Just as Wearmouth-Jarrow didn't produce accounts of miracles centred on its holy abbots so York similarly appears not to have produced miracle stories associated with its bishops. The miracle stories associated with bishops that Alcuin recounted had all been derived by Bede from sources other than York itself. The stories associated with John of Beverley came from Beverley rather than York, the account of Wilfrid's vision came from Acca at Hexham and Cuthbert's miracles were recounted by a series of individuals none of whom were associated with York.

The anonymous Vita Ceolfridi and Bede's Historia Abbatum had both been concerned to chart the succession of abbots in the community of Wearmouth-Jarrow and to stress that abbots were elected in the correct manner, preserving the internal unity of the monastic community.⁵¹ Alcuin drew upon these influences to describe

⁴⁹ Vita Ceolfridi 40, ed. C. Plummer, Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp.403-404.

⁵⁰ The fact that the Historia Abbatum is a later work of Bede composed after 725 is evident from the fact that when composing the Chronica Maiora in 725, Bede used the Vita Ceolfridi rather than the Historia Abbatum which was presumably still unwritten. See W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian', in Bede. His Life, Times and Writings, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford, 1935), pp.129-132; B. Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in *Ibid.*, p.228.

⁵¹ Vita Ceolfridi 25; HA 6, 13.

the pattern of succession in York. In the early part of his poem which dealt with the bishops of the seventh century Alcuin had not shown a particular interest in describing episcopal succession. His concern to largely ignore the impact of the Irish on the Northumbrian Church had led him to omit Chad from his account and consequently he could not present a picture of regular succession in the see during the seventh century. However, when he came to consider the later bishops of York he began to trace the pattern of their succession and the internal workings of the cathedral community.⁵² John of Beverley retired from the see to enter the *monasterium* at Beverley appointing Wilfrid II to succeed him. Alcuin didn't mention that Wilfrid had been a monk at Whitby but was concerned to stress that he had been trained in the *monasterium* associated with the cathedral seat of York and had served as *vicedomnus* (bishop's deputy) to John.⁵³ Wilfrid 'laid aside the burden of pastoral duties' and appointed Egbert as his successor.⁵⁴

Alcuin did not mention where Egbert received his early training although it was most probably in York. Instead he concentrated on celebrating the bishop's royal origins since his brother Eadberht was king of Northumbria from 737 to 758. Egbert was succeeded by Aelberht, Alcuin's teacher.⁵⁵ It is notable that Alcuin described how the see remained in the hands of the same family since Aelberht was a kinsman

⁵² C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England c.600-c.800', *Northern History* 25 (1989), pp.25-27.

⁵³ BKSY 1210-1220.

⁵⁴ BKSY 1248-87.

⁵⁵ BKSY 1394-1596.

of Egbert. This differs from the accounts of episcopal succession given by Bede where candidates for episcopal office were not shown to have been related to the previous bishop. However, Alcuin's account did not assume that Aelberht's status as a relation of Egbert was responsible for ensuring his succession to the episcopate. He had entered the York community at an early age and by means of his skill as a teacher had proceeded through the ecclesiastical grades. After he had returned to York from pilgrimage to Rome, Aelberht was said to have been 'elected archbishop by popular acclaim.'⁵⁶ Alcuin was thus concerned to stress that it was Aelberht's personal merits rather than his relationship to his predecessor that had ensured his right to rule over the see. Aelberht handed over his episcopal rank to Eanbald during his own lifetime and retired into solitude. Eanbald had acted as Aelberht's associate bishop and assisted Aelberht in the dedication of the Church of the Holy Wisdom.⁵⁷

Alcuin's discussion of Aelberht's election may have been designed to have defended the nature of episcopal succession at York and should be considered in the light of his correspondence where he showed a concern to defend the right of a community to choose its own bishop. Alcuin wrote a series of letters addressed to the Archbishop of York, Eanbald I, and his community expressing concern that there should be no irregularities concerning the election of Eanbald's successor.

I beg you in the name of love that you proceed with wisdom and faithfulness in the election of an archbishop, if this must take place before I come. I call upon you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ not to allow anyone to obtain the see by the heresy of simony, for this would utterly damn our nation. Simony is a most wicked heresy and St Peter condemned it with an eternal

⁵⁶ BKSY 1468.

⁵⁷ BKSY 1518-1525.

anathema.⁵⁸

A further letter urged the community of York to be at harmony with the archbishop and not to let 'anyone disrupt your living unity.'⁵⁹ This suggests that a respectable election could only take place when peace ensued between the archbishop and the community. Alcuin's correspondence therefore indicates that he considered episcopal elections to have taken place in the proper manner only when the current bishop came together with his community to choose a new bishop. He appears to have considered that the freedom of an episcopal community to elect its own successor should be preserved and have sought to preclude the possibility of royal influence in controlling elections. In appealing for the maintenance of established principles in Anglo-Saxon episcopal elections, Alcuin showed that although writing from the continent he remained attached to his homeland. This is because it has been observed that the designation of his successor by the out-going bishop, a practice which Alcuin and Bede both illuminated, was a peculiarly English practice and contravened canon law.⁶⁰

Alcuin's poem should not merely be considered as an attempt to convey an image of the ideal bishop as the ruler of a cathedral community which had established

⁵⁸ Dümmler, no.48, pp.92-93, at p.92. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.6. 'Rogo vos per caritatis fidem, ut fideliter et sapienter in electione pontificis faciatis; si necesse sit electionem fieri, antequam veniam. Iterum iterumque obtestor vos per nomen domini nostri Iesu Christi, ut nullatenus aliquem sinatis per simoniacam heresim episcopatum adquirere; quae omnino perditio gentis est, si fiet. Et est heresis pessima, simoniaca videlicet, quam sanctus Petrus aeterno anathemate damnavit.'

⁵⁹ Dümmler, no.44, pp.89-90.

⁶⁰ Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops"', p.35.

itself in an old Roman city and adopted a communal regime. Like Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica must be viewed in the context of the problems and concerns about the moral laxity of the episcopate discussed in the Letter to Egbert and the Biblical works so Alcuin's poem must be considered in relation to the hortatory tone of his correspondence. This reveals that Alcuin's concern for nostalgia was an attempt to write a tract for his own time and that his York poem was a document designed to offer a blueprint for ecclesiastical reform.

Alcuin's poem located hope for the future stability of the Northumbrian Church in the see of York. In so doing it affirmed and further sought to stimulate York's place at the centre of the *patria*. In the seventh and early eighth centuries Lindisfarne had dominated Northumbria's ecclesiastical life. However, its power was clearly on the wane and was revealed through York's acquisition of metropolitan status. In 750 the see of Lindisfarne was caught up in dynastic tension. Eadberht the son of Leodwald, a king specifically praised by Alcuin for ruling the kingdom in harmony with his brother Archbishop Egbert, imprisoned Cynewulf the bishop of Lindisfarne at Bamburgh. He also attacked Offa, the son of the former king, Aldfrith, who had been descended from a rival line besieging him in the church of Lindisfarne until he was dragged from sanctuary.⁶¹ If one accepts Godman's dating for the poem's completion in 792/3 this relates the poem firmly to the sack of Lindisfarne by Vikings which greatly perturbed Alcuin. In 793 he wrote to King Aethelred of Northumbria describing how the church of St Cuthbert was 'spattered

⁶¹ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, vol.2, pp.39-40. BKSY 1272-1287.

with the blood of the priests of God.’⁶² He also composed a metrical elegiac account of the attack marked by themes of mutability and transience. In it he recounted to Bishop Higbald of Lindisfarne his grief at the destruction inflicted upon the see.

Most beloved brother I lament your disaster
tears flow down my cheeks, my heart grieves with unhappiness
often groaning to myself in a speechless murmur
of how painful to everyone was that day when, alas,
a pagan warband arrived from the ends of the earth
descended suddenly by ship and came to our land
despoiling our fathers’ venerable tombs of their finery
and befouling the temples dedicated to God⁶³

He also addressed Higbald claiming ‘what assurance can the churches of Britain have, if St Cuthbert and so great a company of saints do not defend their own?’⁶⁴ It would be incorrect to see this comment as an attempt to belittle Cuthbert’s power as a protector saint. Instead such a comment must be related to other issues which had beset the see and were revealed in Alcuin’s correspondence.

Alcuin warned Higbald not to glory in the vanities of dress or to be distracted by the indulgences of the flesh. God was said to have forbidden ostentation in clothing and the bishop exhorted to ensure his community avoided such ‘useless adornment.’ Drunkenness was also a problem which Alcuin urged the bishop and his community to avoid.⁶⁵ Meals should be sober and not drunken and the bishop was

⁶² Dümmler, no.16, pp.42-44. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.18.

⁶³ Trans P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (London, 1985), no.10, pp.127-139 at p.137, ll.191-198.

⁶⁴ Dümmler, no.20, pp.56-58, at p.57. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.36. ‘Quae est fiducia aeclesiis Britanniae, si sanctus Cudberhtus cum tanto sanctorum numero suam non defendit?’

⁶⁵ Dümmler, nos. 20, 21, pp.56-59.

told 'let there be counsels of salvation heard among your elders, not drunkenness which is a very pit of hell to those who serve God.'⁶⁶ The implication of these remarks is that such incidents had been occurring at Lindisfarne and Alcuin himself specifically mentioned that the sack was a sign of the chastisement of God.

By the time Alcuin came to complete his York poem the glorious days of the joint rule of King Eadberht and Archbishop Egbert were over and Aelberht himself had died causing Alcuin to long to leave 'my mournful poem...drowned in an ocean of tears.'⁶⁷ Alcuin's *patria* had entered a state of disarray and chaos epitomised by the Viking raids. In a letter to King Aethelred of Northumbria he had written of how 'since the days of King Aelfwald, fornication, adultery and incest have flooded the land'⁶⁸, and spoke further of a land marked by greed, robbery and violence. In fact from before Aelfwald's reign Northumbria had been marked by turmoil. King Eadberht had abdicated of his own accord in 758 to become a cleric at York where he was to die.⁶⁹ Within a year his son Oswulf was killed by members of his own household and replaced by the usurper of non-royal birth, Aethewald Moll.⁷⁰ Eadberht's descendants did not then recover power for another twenty years. In 765

⁶⁶ Dümmler, no.21, pp.58-59, at p.59. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.38. '...et inter seniores consiliu salutis, non ebrietatis iniquitas, quae fovea est perditionis et multum Deo servientibus noxia.'

⁶⁷ *BKSY* 1569-70.

⁶⁸ Dümmler, no.16, p.43. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.19. 'Sed a diebus Aelfwaldi regis fornicationes adulteria et incestus inundaverunt super terram...'

⁶⁹ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol.2, p.44.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Aethelwald Moll was overthrown and tonsured.⁷¹ Power then passed to Alhred but the turmoil was not abated.⁷² Civil disturbances at York involving Frisians caused Alcuin to send back to Frisia the scholar Liudger who had been studying at York.⁷³ In 774 Alhred was driven from York into exile fleeing first to Bamburgh and thence to Pictland.⁷⁴

At this juncture the son of Aethelwald Moll then became king but he was driven into exile soon after.⁷⁵ It is noticeable that Alcuin discussed how Archbishop Aethelberht was said not to have spared evil kings and nobles.⁷⁶ The rebellion against Aethelwald Moll's son brought Aelfwald to the throne and the kingship passed back into the hands of the archbishop's own family. Aelfwald received the papal legate, George, bishop of Ostia where a council was held to deal with the state of the kingdom and its church. Despite the enactment of this legislation, however, Aelfwald does not appear to have improved conditions. The imperious tone of Alcuin's correspondence indicates this. A further conspiracy overthrew Aelfwald and his sons, Oelf and Oelfwine, took sanctuary in the church at York.⁷⁷ Osred then

⁷¹ Ibid., p.43; *Annals of Tigernach*, ed. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vol. 17 (1896), p.262; *Chronicles and Annals of Medieval Ireland and Wales*, ed. K. Gabrowski and D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1984), p.137.

⁷² D. Dumville, 'The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), pp.23-50 at pp.30, 32, 35.

⁷³ Altfrid, *Vita Liutgeri*, 11, MGH SS 2, p.407.

⁷⁴ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol.2, p.45; *ASC D*, s.a. 774.

⁷⁵ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol.2, pp.45-47; *ASC D*, s.a.778.

⁷⁶ *BKSY* 1479.

⁷⁷ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol.2, pp.52-53; *ASC D*, s.a.788.

reigned for a year before he was taken prisoner, tonsured at York, expelled and deprived of his kingdom and Aethelred, a king whose accession Alcuin welcomed, took power.⁷⁸ In 791 Alcuin wrote to Aethelred speaking of his personal affection for the king. He urged him to reign with reason, shun cruelty, act purely and with self-control, to speak truth and not falsehood and to refrain from drunkenness and anger.⁷⁹ However, the violence did not end. In 791 the sons of Aelfwald, still in sanctuary at York, were forcibly abducted and murdered.⁸⁰ The raids of 793 were thus a just punishment for the sins of Alcuin's *patria*.

Writing to King Aethelred in 793 Alcuin remonstrated against a people who had neglected the God they should honour. He condemned their luxurious dress and the manner in which they cut their hair in a pagan fashion claiming 'luxury in princes means poverty for the people.' Some were said to pant under the weight of their clothes whilst others died from the cold.⁸¹ Such themes were continued in a letter to Aethelred, the 'patrician' Osbald and another Northumbrian lord, Osberht. They were told to think about God and his rescuing mercy and to avoid all evil deeds of carnal pleasures, worldly ambition, greed, plunder, lying, envy, murder, drunkenness and pride. Alcuin claimed that he was not only advising them but begging them to change and mend their ways.⁸² However, these words seemed to have fallen on deaf

⁷⁸ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, vol.2, p.52; ASC D, s.a.788, 789.

⁷⁹ Dümmler, no.30, pp.71-72.

⁸⁰ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, vol.2, p.53.

⁸¹ Dümmler, no.16, pp.42-44.

⁸² Dümmler, no.18, pp.49-53.

ears since in 796 Aethelred was assassinated.⁸³

Alcuin had remedies to attempt to cope with the disastrous history of the Northumbrian kingdom. The time was ripe for *correctio* and *emendatio*. As J.M. Wallace-Hadrill has noted, 'Alcuin's is not the language of mild moral exhortation to good kings in sunny days; it is the language of urgent reproof generated by insecurity and disaster.'⁸⁴ York was to serve as the powerhouse through which the kingdom might be reformed and restored to moral order. Peace could only prevail where both rulers and people obeyed God's teaching and pursued justice and mercy. Laity and clergy should live together in peace bounded by love.⁸⁵ In the York poem Alcuin therefore looked back to the reigns of earlier kings who had acted in conjunction with and not against their bishops. He praised the activities of the early Northumbrians, Edwin, Oswald and Oswiu who had reigned with justice and valour. Eadberht and Egbert had also governed the church and kingdom wisely and in harmony. Alcuin's poem should therefore be seen as an attempt to voice idealised attitudes concerning a bishop's relationship with the community and to stimulate feelings of social cohesion within that community. The proper conduct of kings and bishops was essential for a kingdom's survival.

Aware that bishops stood at the head of the church hierarchy, Alcuin built upon a concern which had also been stressed by Bede and the compilers of conciliar

⁸³ *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol.2, p.376.

⁸⁴ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, p.120.

⁸⁵ Dümmler, nos. 16, 17, pp.42-9.

legislation by stressing the necessity for bishops to engage in preaching.⁸⁶ This theme is consistently hammered home in his correspondence. Preaching was essential if the bishop was to truly fulfil his calling as a pastor. In a letter to Eanbald II he wrote 'let not your tongue cease preaching, nor your feet visiting the flock entrusted to you.'⁸⁷ Similarly he exhorted the bishop 'never let your tongue be silent from preaching.'⁸⁸ In a general exhortation to the bishops of Britain he urged them.

Holy Fathers and shepherds, bright stars of Britain, do all you can to feed Christ's flock by constant preaching of the gospel and good examples of a holy life. Preach the truth, correct with vigour, encourage persuasively.⁸⁹

Cunibert, bishop of Winchester, was told not to keep his mouth silent from 'the word of evangelical truth.'⁹⁰ Archbishop Aelberht was praised in the York poem for fully undertaking his pastoral duties. He 'proved himself a good shepherd in every respect' and diligently offered his flock 'food of the holy Word.'⁹¹ Closely linked to this concern for preaching was the need to stress that the ideal bishop ought to insist upon the absolute necessity of instructing clerics committed to his care.

In order to fulfil his role as a pastor and to ensure that the priesthood likewise

⁸⁶ For further comment see chapters two and six.

⁸⁷ Dümmler, no.114, pp.166-170, at p.167. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.7. 'Non cessat lingua tua in praedicando, non pes tuus in circuiendo gregem tibi commissum...'

⁸⁸ Dümmler, no.116, p.171. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.10. 'Numquam a sanctae praedicationis verbo lingua sileat...'

⁸⁹ Dümmler, no.104, pp.150-51, at p.150. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.34. 'O sanctissimi patres et pastores, o clarissima totius Brittaniae lumina, pascite gregem Christi, quantum in vobis est, assidua evangelicae praedicationis instantia et bonis sanctae conversationis exemplis. Praedicate veraciter, corrigite viriliter, exhortamini suaviter.'

⁹⁰ Dümmler, no.189, p.317.

⁹¹ *BKSY* 1471-1473.

exercised its pastoral duties, Alcuin insisted that the bishop should encourage educational and scholarly pursuits. He was both to teach and be taught. Alcuin's concern for an educated clergy drew upon his own experiences at the school of York which he was to celebrate in the York poem. It was at the school of York where Archbishop Egbert was said to have opened to his disciples some of the seeds of scripture from his couch before rising for prayer. Noble youths of York were said to have flocked to Egbert for instruction, some in the rudiments of grammar, some in the liberal arts and some in the Holy Scriptures themselves.⁹² Aelberht continued his work by 'skilfully training some in the arts and rules of grammar' and also by 'pouring upon others a flood of rhetorical eloquence.'⁹³ His 'eagerness and zeal for reading Scripture' was said not to have shrunk when he was faced with the burdens of his responsibilities.⁹⁴

In a letter to Eanbald II, the archbishop was exhorted to provide teachers for the boys and to establish classes for reading, singing and writing. He was also told to revive the study of scripture among the brethren and not to waste the time which Alcuin himself had spent in building up the library.⁹⁵ Bishop Higbald of Lindisfarne was similarly told to keep up the practice of reading. Men should be heard reading in his houses and not playing in the street.⁹⁶ Bishop Ethelberht of Hexham was

⁹² Vita Alcuini 2-4, MGH SS 15.1, pp.185-187.

⁹³ BKSY 1434-1435.

⁹⁴ BKSY 1481-1482.

⁹⁵ Dümmler, no.114, pp.166-170.

⁹⁶ Dümmler, no.21, pp.58-59.

informed that it was necessary to read the Holy Scriptures since it was from them that one was able to understand what to follow and what to avoid. He was also informed that he should diligently 'teach the boys and young men the knowledge of Christian books, that they may be worthy to succeed you and may pray for you.'⁹⁷

The merits of acquiring such teachers were clearly emphasised.

Without teachers such a place as yours can hardly be saved, if at all. It is good to give alms to feed the poor with physical food, but satisfying the hungry soul with spiritual teaching is better.⁹⁸

Like Bede, Alcuin recognised the importance of Gregory the Great's writings. He wrote to Eanbald II.

wherever you go, St Gregory's pastoral treatise should go with you. Read it and re-read it again and again, that you may know yourself and your work in it and always have before you a model of life and teaching. It is a mirror of a bishop's life and a cure for the wounds inflicted by the devil's wiles.⁹⁹

This concern for reading was also directed towards the archbishop of Canterbury, Aethelheard. Kent was also not without its share of troubles during this period. For much of the eighth century the kingdom had been subjected to the rule

⁹⁷ Dümmler, no.31, pp.72-73, at p.73. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.32. 'Pueros adolescentesque diligenter librorum scientiam ad viam Dei docete, ut digni vestri honoris fiant successores, etiam et intercessores pro vobis.'

⁹⁸ Ibid. 'Et talis locus sine doctoribus aut non aut vix salvus fieri poterit. Magna est elemosina pauperem cibo pascere corporali; sed maior est animam doctrina spiritali satiare esurientem.'

⁹⁹ Dümmler, no.116, p.171. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.11. '...et quocumque vadas, liber sancti Gregorii pastoralis tecum pergat. Sepius illum legas et relegas, quatenus te ipsum et tuum opus cognoscas in illo; ut, qualiter vivere vel docere debeas, ante oculos habeas. Speculum est enim pontificalis vitae et medicina contra singula diabolicae fraudis vulnera.'

of the Mercian kings. In diplomas from 772 and 774, Offa was said to have granted estates in Kent in his own right without any reference to a Kentish ruler.¹⁰⁰ Kent briefly gained independence in 776 at the battle of Otford but Offa regained it by 785 and held it until his death.¹⁰¹ Archbishop Jaenberht and Offa became embroiled in conflict over the monastery of Cookham and Jaenberht was unable to retrieve the monastery and its estates which had been seized by Offa. In 787 Offa challenged the power of Canterbury further by raising the see of Lichfield to metropolitan status. On the death of Jaenberht, Archbishop Aethelheard was chosen by Offa in an attempt to secure a more amenable archbishop.¹⁰² He secured from Alcuin that it was canonically correct that the archbishop-elect should be consecrated by the other archbishop in his kingdom, Hygeberht the archbishop of the new metropolitan see of Lichfield.¹⁰³ When Offa died in 796 there was immediately a rising in Kent and Mercian control was overthrown.

Alcuin wrote to Aethelheard after the rising and urged him to return to his see since he had fled from it.¹⁰⁴ The archbishop was informed that he would be able to understand the necessity for remaining in his see to act as a shepherd for his flock if he read the homilies of Gregory the Great. He was also informed to bring an interest in reading into the church that books might be used. In a general letter

¹⁰⁰ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.111-127; BCS 207, 213 and 214.

¹⁰¹ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, p.113.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.114-120.

¹⁰³ W. Levison, England and the Continent in the Eighth Century (Oxford, 1946), pp.245-6.

¹⁰⁴ Dümmler, no.128, pp.189-191.

addressed to the people of Kent, Alcuin informed them that they should get themselves 'teachers and masters of the Scriptures, that there be no want of the word of God among you, and you do not lack those who can guide the people of God, lest the spring of truth dry up among you.'¹⁰⁵

Alcuin belonged to an age where the authority of secular and ecclesiastical powers was increasingly discussed, defined and debated. He was thus concerned not only to define the functions of the church hierarchy but also to relate these functions to a theocratic ideal of kingship.¹⁰⁶ He was aware that the royal virtues identifiable with the prosperity and righteousness of kingdoms should be properly defined. The events in Northumbria had shown the consequences which resulted from the fact that the church was a community that had absorbed earthly powers into its being. Political chaos brought spiritual malaise. If king or bishop behaved badly, kingdoms would fall. In two letters to Archbishop Aethelheard, Alcuin made it clear that the control and management of episcopal estates was an ecclesiastical function.¹⁰⁷ The bishop was an agent of God on earth. The role of the king was to support this arrangement by means of his physical defence with the sword. The sword supported the word.

¹⁰⁵ Dümmler, no.129, pp.191-192, at p.191. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.65. 'Adducite vobis doctores et magistros sanctae scripturae, ne sit apud vos inopia verbi Dei, aut vobis desint qui populum Dei regere valeant; ne fons veritatis in vobis exsiccetur.'

¹⁰⁶ *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge, 1988), pp.83-341; W. Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (London, 1978); L. Wallach, *Alcuin and Charlemagne* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1959), pp.5-72; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp.98-123.

¹⁰⁷ Dümmler, nos.17, 255, pp.45-49, 412-413.

The secular power is separate from the spiritual power: the former bears the sword of death in its hand, the latter the key of life in its tongue...¹⁰⁸

The people of Kent were told that the 'nobles among the people should use their positions with judgment and lead the people by justice, loving their father's precedents more than money.'¹⁰⁹

Elsewhere kings were exhorted to obey the teaching of ecclesiastical authorities. Aethelred of Northumbria was told.

Obey God's priests. They must give account to God for their advice to you, and you for your obedience to them. Let there be united peace and love between you. They pray for you; you protect them.¹¹⁰

King Aethelred was further informed of his responsibilities thus.

the princes and judges of the people must lead them in justice and piety. They must be as fathers to widows, orphans and the poor, for a people is uplifted by the fairness of its princes. They should be defenders and guardians of the churches of Christ, that they may live long in prosperity through the prayers of the servants of God. The church is the bride of Christ and its bridegroom punishes him who tries to violate it and take its possessions.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Dümmler, no.17, pp.45-49, at p.48. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.62. 'Divisa est potestas saecularis et potestas spiritalis; illa portat gladium mortis in manu, haec clavem vitae in lingua.'

¹⁰⁹ Dümmler, no.129, pp.191-192, at p.192. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.65. 'Similiter nobiles, qui sunt in populo, suas dignitates cum consiliis regant et populo per iustitiam praesint, amantes paterna statuta in iudiciis magis quam pecuniam...'

¹¹⁰ Dümmler, no.16, pp.42-44, at p.44. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.20. 'Oboedite sacerdotibus Dei. Illi enim habent rationem reddere Deo, quomodo vos ammonent; et vos, quomodo oboediatis illis. Sit una pax et karitas inter vos. Illi intercessores pro vobis, vos defensores pro illis.'

¹¹¹ Dümmler, no.18, pp.49-52, at pp.51-52. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.22. 'Similiter principes et iudices populi in iustitia et pietate populo praesint. Viduis, pupillis, et miseris sint quasi patres; quia aequitas principum populi est exaltatio. Ecclesiarum Christi sint defensores et tutores; ut servorum Dei orationibus longa vivant prosperitate. Ecclesia enim sponsa est Christi; et qui eam violare nititur vel rapere, quae sua sunt, vindicat in eum deus Christus, sponsus sanctae suae ecclesiae.'

Offa of Mercia was similarly informed that he should act as a 'brother to the priests of God' and his successor Cenwulf told to always 'honour God's priests.'¹¹² The bishop's role was thus clearly to inform rulers and peoples of how they should govern and be governed. The bishop was the custodian of the people of God and a society without bishops would be inconceivable.

Despite Alcuin's attempts to inaugurate reform both through the moral exemplars found in the York poem and in the impatient insistence of his correspondence, there is evidence to suggest that his views and exhortations fell upon deaf ears. Archbishop Eanbald II of York suffered from difficulties when he took up his position. Alcuin wrote to him in 801 explaining that he thought he might be personally responsible for his troubles. Harbours of the king's enemies or protecting their possessions were reasons given to explain the archbishop's problems.¹¹³ In a further letter Alcuin criticised the archbishop for blurring the distinctions which should exist between the secular and ecclesiastical powers. The archbishop himself seems to have been anxious to take up the sword as well as the 'key of life' and was criticised for retaining too many soldiers in his retinue.¹¹⁴ Writing to a monk Alcuin urged that the archbishop be diligently counselled 'not to be a lover of the world or to give way to flattery or to let his heart be sunk in greed

¹¹² Dümmler, nos.101, 123, pp 147-148, 180-181.

¹¹³ Dümmler, no.232, pp.376-378.

¹¹⁴ Dümmler, no.233, pp.378-379.

for lands or riches because of his throng of relatives.¹¹⁵ Writing to Archbishop Aethelheard in 801, Alcuin spoke of how the church was in dire need of reform. The clergy were said to have been.

very corrupt and almost reduced to the level of a frivolous laity, so that their only distinction seems to be the tonsure, for their conduct is much the same, as is the vanity of their dress, their pride, their over-eating and so on.¹¹⁶

The existence of practices condemned as pagan also worried Alcuin. He saw evidence of the carrying of amulets and use of charms. He was anxious to ensure that popular belief in the power of relics be adequately understood and controlled and attacked Christians who shared certain customs or beliefs with pagan practices.

For they are carrying amulets thinking them something sacred. It is better to copy the examples of the saints in the heart than to carry bones in bags, to have gospel teachings written in one's mind than to carry them round one's neck written on scraps of parchment.¹¹⁷

In a further letter he wrote of the continued existence of the practice of divination by bird song and sneezes and urged that it be forbidden completely.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Dümmler, no.209, pp.346-349, at p.348. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.31. 'Ammone illum diligentius, ne sit saeculi amator, ne adulatorbius consentiens, ne propter propinquorum turbam suum cupiditatibus terrarum vel divitiarum involvat animum...'

¹¹⁶ Dümmler, no.230, pp.374-375, at p.374. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.66. 'Quae magna ex parte diu corrupta viluit et pene laicorum vanitate coaequata est, ita ut tonsura tantummodo discreta videtur; ceterum moribus multa ex parte consimilis, ceu in vestimentorum vanitate et arrogantia et conviviorum superfluitate et aliis rebus.'

¹¹⁷ Dümmler, no.290, p.448. Trans S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.69. 'Nam ligaturas portant, quasi sanctum quid estimantes. Sed melius est in corde sanctorum imitare exempla, quam in saeculis portare ossa; evangelicas habere scriptas ammonitiones in mente magis, quam pittaciolis exaratas in collo circumferre.'

¹¹⁸ Dümmler, no.291, p.449.

Alcuin's York Poem: Continental Influences

In presenting a picture of York's development as an episcopal see in the York poem, Alcuin looked not only to the city itself but also to a number of continental parallels. The poem's opening description of York praises its 'high walls and lofty towers' and the fertility of its river and countryside.¹¹⁹ Donald Bullough has compared this description to the eighth-century *encomia* on Milan and Verona composed c.740 and c.796 respectively.¹²⁰ These poems celebrate the monuments and saints of the cities that are their subjects.¹²¹ The *Versus de Verona* list the twelve apostles, forty martyrs and thirty five saints associated with the city and describe episcopal patronage of the church and saints cults.¹²² Bullough has also suggested that since Alcuin was at Pavia in the early 760s, he may have been inspired by a lost *laudatio* celebrating the city.¹²³ Godman dismisses these influences claiming that 'the resemblance is superficial' and stating that Alcuin's description of York serves only as a preface to the wider concerns of his work.¹²⁴ Whilst the poem does contain more than a description of York its opening is nevertheless important in terms of the view of the episcopate which Alcuin develops

¹¹⁹ BKS^Y, 19-45.

¹²⁰ Bullough, 'Hagiography as Patriotism', pp.340, 354-55.

¹²¹ *Versus de Verona, Versum de Mediolano Civitate*, ed. G.B. Pighi, Università di Bologna, Studi di filologia classica 8 (Bologna, 1960); J.K. Hyde, 'Medieval descriptions of cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1966), pp.312-15.

¹²² J.-C. Picard, 'Conscience urbaine et culte des saints: De Milan sous Liutprand à Vérone sous Pépin I d'Italie', in *Hagiographie, Culture et Sociétés*, pp.455-469.

¹²³ Bullough, 'Hagiography as Patriotism', pp.340, 354-5.

¹²⁴ BKS^Y, p.xlviii.

throughout the rest of the poem. This is because it establishes the conception that the role and identity of a bishop is strongly related to the see which he occupies and that the bishop is a civic figure.

The concerns of Alcuin's text should also clearly be related to those of the Liber Pontificalis, the series of official biographies of Roman popes written by a number of different continuators.¹²⁵ This text, perhaps produced in the papal chancery, developed into a series of biographies in the early sixth century and from these a 'second edition' was produced. This was then continued and by the beginning of the eighth century was updated on a life by life basis. It is possible that the text was used as a textbook for the education of young Roman clerics.¹²⁶ The text was known in eighth-century Northumbria. Bede knew it in the 'second edition' and cited from it in his Chronica Maiora, Historia Ecclesiastica and Martyrology. The last life known to him was that of Gregory II to which he gained access before its subject was dead.¹²⁷ It is possible that he gained access to the text through one of the numerous parties of Englishmen who visited Rome at this time, most probably that associated with Ceolfrid, his own abbot. Alcuin himself was in personal contact with Rome and liable to possess knowledge of the activities of Pope Hadrian I and his immediate predecessors. He travelled to Rome with Aelberht on a number of journeys before

¹²⁵ Liber Pontificalis, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886-1892); T.F.X. Noble, 'A new look at the Liber Pontificalis', Archivum Historiae Pontificiae 23 (1985), pp.347-58.

¹²⁶ T.F.X. Noble, 'Literacy and the papal government in late antiquity and the early middle ages', in The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp.82-108 at pp.97-98.

¹²⁷ W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian', in Bede. His Life, Times and Writings, ed. A. Hamilton-Thompson (Oxford, 1935), pp.120, 135.

Aelberht became archbishop of York and a number of books were obtained.¹²⁸ Alcuin was also sent to Rome to obtain the *pallium* from Hadrian I on behalf of Aelberht's successor, Eanbald.¹²⁹ Papal biographies would have provided Alcuin with the means of exploring the history of a single see and would also further serve to emphasise the Romanist nature of Alcuin's poem. By linking York to Rome, Alcuin could further equate York with the missionary activities of Gregory the Great, stress its historic status as a metropolitan see and emphasise its commitment to Latin orthodoxy.

The relationship between the poem and a continental literary genre which first developed at the end of the eighth century has hitherto been overlooked. It is possible to suggest that the poem contains notable similarities to a group of texts which came to be produced in Carolingian and Ottonian Europe and were known collectively as *gesta episcoporum* and *gesta abbatum*.¹³⁰ These texts focus upon a particular church or monastery and provide a list of bishops or abbots recording the gifts which they made to the church and the reforms which they undertook in a similar manner to Alcuin's poem. The texts contain liturgical and hagiographical elements and in some cases were concerned to establish the unity of the diocesan church by describing the

¹²⁸ Alcuin, *Carmen* 2.7-10, MGH PLAC 1, p.206; Dümmler nos.172, 271, pp.284-285, 429-430; BKS^Y 1454-9.

¹²⁹ *Vita Alcuini* 9, MGH SS 15.1, p.190.

¹³⁰ M. Sot, *Gesta Episcoporum, Gesta Abbatum*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental A-I.4 (Turnhout, 1981); Id., 'Arguments hagiographiques et historiographiques dans le Gesta Episcoporum', in *Hagiographie, Culture et Sociétés*, pp.95-104; F.L. Ganshof, 'L'historiographie franque sous les Mérovingiens et les Carolingiens', *Settimane* 17 (1970), pp.631-85.

submission of parish churches and monasteries to the cathedral church. Drawing ultimately upon the influence of the Liber Pontificalis, the texts were often begun by one author and continued by a series of redactors. An exception to this was the text believed to be the first example of the genre written in northern Europe, Paul the Deacon's Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium.¹³¹ The connections between this text and Alcuin's poem are worth consideration.

Paul the Deacon had arrived in Francia in 782 to plead for the release of a brother who had been taken captive and remained there for about four years.¹³² The Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium was written in 784 at the request of Angilram, the bishop of Metz who had been appointed as royal chaplain to Charlemagne. The text describes the see of Metz as an apostolic foundation associated with St Peter, provides a list of its thirty seven bishops, recounts how Bishop Auctor protected the city from an attack by Huns, describes St Arnulf and his Carolingian descendants and records the renewal the church underwent through the reforms of Chrodegang. The text fulfilled both a spiritual and political purpose. It operated as a celebration of Metz and its bishops and, through its emphasis upon Arnulf and the genealogy of the Carolingians, it served to justify the Carolingian regime.¹³³

The parallels between this text and Alcuin's poem are clear. Both present an account of a single city and its bishops recording the foundation and development of

¹³¹ Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS 2, pp.260-70.

¹³² P. Godman, Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance (London, 1985), pp.82-83.

¹³³ W. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History (Princeton, 1988), pp.370-8; Id., 'Paul the Deacon's Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium and the Early Design of Charlemagne's Succession', Traditio 42 (1986), pp.59-93.

an episcopal see and the reforms the bishops introduced by which they made the cathedral clergy adopt a communal regime. The sees were both connected with St Peter to whom the cathedral church of York was dedicated. Both texts also concern themselves with the relationship between the see and the wider world through their focus upon royal developments and accounts of kingship. Thus both texts possessed a political function.

Although Alcuin had met Charlemagne at Parma in 781 and had been invited to join the Frankish court, it is probable that his arrival at court followed rather than preceded that of Paul the Deacon.¹³⁴ His presence at the Carolingian court is ignored by Paul the Deacon in writings which are among the most important sources for the court circle and court learning before 786.¹³⁵ This is understandable since the works which were to establish Alcuin's intellectual fame were composed after 790 and only a few of his letters and some short verse compositions can be attributed to the years before this date. Lack of direct reference to the fact that the two knew of each other does not mean that Alcuin could not have met Paul or that he could have read or at least known of Paul's text. In the composition of his Historia Langobardorum, Paul the Deacon utilised a copy of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica. The distinctive hand evident in the text of Bede known as the Northumbrian 'Moore'

¹³⁴ Vita Alcuini 9, MGH SS 15.1, p.190; D.A. Bullough, '*Aula Renovata*: the Carolingian Court before the Aachen Palace', in Id., Carolingian Renewal (Manchester, 1992), p.136.

¹³⁵ D.A. Bullough, 'Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven', p.175.

Bede is evidence of its presence at the Frankish court.¹³⁶ The text could have been brought there by Alcuin and his northern English circle. Furthermore Alcuin was aware of Paul's patron, Angilram.¹³⁷ It may have been more than coincidental that after spending a period of time at the Frankish court where Paul the Deacon had exercised a formative influence, Alcuin completed and published his poem on a return to England.

One of the chief themes which emerges in Alcuin's presentation of the episcopate within the poem is that of the bishop as benefactor. Bishops built up the material status of York as an episcopal see by bestowing upon it wealth and splendour. Alcuin's accounts of their endowments mirrors Eddius Stephanus' concern to express the building activity and patronage of the church undertaken by Wilfrid. Just as Bede had described the books, pictures and relics bequeathed to Wearmouth and Jarrow by Benedict Biscop in the *Historia Abbatum* so Alcuin presented bishops who behaved in a similar manner to the seventh-century abbot. By drawing out a picture of acts of episcopal piety and benefaction, Alcuin created an image of the ideal bishop as the first citizen of an urban community.

Alcuin's account of Bosa and Wilfrid II, both monks from Whitby who became bishops of York, is the only one to mention their endowments of the church at York. Wilfrid II added 'many ornaments with fine inscriptions to the holy church', gave it silver vessels and covered the altar with layers of gilded silver. He was said

¹³⁶ D.A. Bullough, 'Ethnic History and the Carolingians: an alternative reading of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*', in *Carolingian Renewal*, pp.111-12.

¹³⁷ Dümmler no.90, p.134.

to have given the church these treasures from a desire not to hoard up wealth of his own and he also endowed churches outside York with gifts.¹³⁸ Egbert adorned churches with silver, gold, gems and 'hanging silken tapestries of foreign pattern.'¹³⁹ Alcuin recorded three distinct enterprises undertaken by Archbishop Aelberht. Firstly, Aelberht gave gifts to the cathedral church of St Peter. He dedicated an altar to St Paul in the spot where Edwin had been baptised covering it with gold, silver and jewels. Above the altar he hung a chandelier and at the altar itself erected a cross 'weighing many pounds in pure silver.' He erected another altar, and ordered a large cruet to be made in pure gold for the celebration of the mass. Alcuin also recorded his own involvement in another of Aelberht's activities, the construction of a new basilica with 'fine inlaid ceilings and windows' and thirty altars. The church which was dedicated to Sancta Sophia, Holy Wisdom, was built by Alcuin along with Eanbald who was to succeed Aelberht.¹⁴⁰ Aelberht's third achievement was to amass a large collection of books. These were largely classical and patristic works and were entrusted to Alcuin. He was clearly indebted to Aelberht as the central figure in his own intellectual development. Alcuin's discussion of the munificence and magnificence of York's bishops contrasts vividly with Bede's concern to praise episcopal poverty. It is evident that Alcuin as the former member

¹³⁸ BKSY, 1222-1230.

¹³⁹ BKSY, 1265-1270.

¹⁴⁰ BKSY, 1490-1521; R.K. Morris, 'Alcuin, York and the alma sophia', pp.80-90; K.Harrison, 'The Saxon Cathedral at York', Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 39 (1956-8), pp.436-44; Id., 'The Pre-Conquest Churches of York: with an appendix on eighth-century Northumbrian annals' Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 40 (1960), pp.232-49.

of a cathedral see was less concerned about the acquisition of property and wealth by members of religious communities than Bede who praised poor bishops because of his monastic background and adherence to Benedictine values.¹⁴¹

One text which contained a marked interest in church foundations and endowments was the Liber Pontificalis. Many of the lives of the popes recounted in this text show a marked concern to note the contributions they made to the internal decoration of various churches. Their power and prestige was shown to lie in their ability to bequeath to Rome an impressive series of churches and monasteries filled with various treasures. Of the early popes Silvester was noted for building a church on the estate of one of his priests, Equitius. He provided it with a number of gifts and the extensive discussion of the character of such gifts by the compiler of his life reveals a similar concern to Alcuin's descriptions of the munificence of the episcopal occupants of the see of York. Among the gifts made to his foundation, Silvester granted it a gold chalice, a silver chrism-paten inlaid with gold and twelve bronze candlestick chandeliers.¹⁴² Later in the fifth century, Innocentius decorated the basilicas of Saints Gervasius and Protasius presenting them with a number of silver and bronze candlesticks, chalices and vessels.¹⁴³

Honorius I's restoration of St Peter's in the seventh century involved covering its doors with silver and providing it with two pairs of silver candlesticks. He also

¹⁴¹ See chapter two above.

¹⁴² Liber Pontificalis I, pp.170-201.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.220-224.

built the church of St Agnes the martyr and decorated her tomb with silver.¹⁴⁴ The eighth-century popes continued their predecessors work of building and decorating churches. Gregory II built an oratory in St Peter's and provided gifts of bowls, crosses, jewels and vessels. He also renewed a series of other churches providing a gold image with jewels in the church of St Andrew and constructing a series of monasteries.¹⁴⁵ Zacharias improved the condition of many of the saints locations and provided a number of altar-cloths. Like Alcuin's mentor, Aelberht he was praised for his learning and translated Gregory the Great's Dialogues into Greek.¹⁴⁶ Alcuin would have been able to see for himself the work undertaken by Hadrian I in Rome and his visit to the see, the arrival of 'Albinus deliciosus regis', is recorded in the Liber Pontificalis.¹⁴⁷ At St Peter's, Hadrian provided a cloth representing St Peter's release from the angel and close to the great silver doors provided a curtain of silk. He also provided a great cross-shaped light and a gold-rimmed silver chalice. The list of benefactions made by Hadrian I in the Liber Pontificalis is particularly extensive. As well as building and endowing a number of churches with gifts he personally restored the Claudian aqueduct refreshing the city's diminishing water supplies.¹⁴⁸ Alcuin's devotion to the work of Hadrian is shown in the epitaph which

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.323-327.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.396-414.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.426-439.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.494.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.486-523.

he most likely composed for the pope.¹⁴⁹

Alcuin could also look to Gaul for examples of episcopal benefaction. His use of the sixth-century poetry of Venantius Fortunatus was far more extensive than Bede's.¹⁵⁰ The works of Fortunatus are included among the Christian-Latin poets in Alcuin's list of the contents of the York cathedral library.¹⁵¹ Alcuin was aware that both he and Fortunatus shared similar concerns and wrote of bishops using similar literary forms. Through his Vita S. Martini metrica, a metrical rendition of Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini, Fortunatus had bequeathed to Alcuin the idea of composing a verse counterpart to a prose work composed by someone else. Furthermore, Fortunatus' use of panegyric in order to praise the princely status and power of bishops formed the basis for Alcuin's lengthy description of Archbishop Aelberht.

Fortunatus' works had emphasised that the Merovingian Church was fundamentally an urban institution. He had written panegyric poems praising the episcopal sees of Verdun, Metz and Bordeaux.¹⁵² In a poem written to Ageric of Verdun, Fortunatus claimed that a bishop was a source of pride to his city stating that although Verdun itself was small its greatness lay in the merits of its bishop.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.523; L. Wallach, Alcuin and Charlemagne, pp.178-197.

¹⁵⁰ BKSY, p.lxxi; R.W. Hunt and M. Lapidge, 'Manuscript Evidence for Knowledge of the Poems of Venantius Fortunatus in Late Anglo-Saxon England', Anglo-Saxon England 8 (1979), pp.279-95, esp. pp.287-295.

¹⁵¹ BKSY 1553.

¹⁵² Venantius Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 3.23, 3.13, 1.15, ed. F. Leo, MGH AA 4.1.

¹⁵³ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 3.23.1-2.

He had also written groups of poems for and about episcopal patrons: Leontius of Bordeaux, Germanus of Paris, Felix of Nantes and Gregory of Tours which emphasised their dedication as churchmen to building programmes and the patronage of the church.¹⁵⁴ These poems included panegyrics intended for public recitation as well as smaller works, commemorative inscriptions for church walls and epitaphs.

As metropolitan, Leontius of Bordeaux was praised as the pastor of a great city who carried out an extensive policy of building and restoration. A great fire which had devastated Bordeaux offered the bishop an opportunity to act as a benefactor in the city by restoring it to its former glory.¹⁵⁵ This recalls Aelberht's construction of the new basilica at York especially when the York Annals record how in 741 a 'monasterium in Eboraca civitate' was burned.¹⁵⁶ Leontius also restored a basilica of St Vincent and founded a *martyrium* to contain the saint's relic.¹⁵⁷ He renovated the Church of St Denis to serve the local population on a church estate and replaced a pagan with a Christian centre of worship by dedicating a shrine in the Dordogne to St Nazarius.¹⁵⁸ His major renovation of the basilica of St Eutropius which included the fitting of a sculptured ceiling was said to have taken place

¹⁵⁴ J. George, Venantius Fortunatus (Oxford, 1992), ch.5; B. Brennan, 'The image of the Merovingian bishop in the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus', Journal of Medieval History 18 (1992), pp.115-139; Id., 'The career of Venantius Fortunatus', Traditio 6 (1985), pp.59-94.

¹⁵⁵ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 1.15.45-52.

¹⁵⁶ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, vol.2, p.38. The new basilica supplemented rather than replaced St Peter's, see Harrison, 'The Saxon Cathedral at York', p.242.

¹⁵⁷ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 1.8, 1.9.

¹⁵⁸ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 1.10, 11.

through the intervention of the saint himself who had appeared to a priest in a dream.¹⁵⁹ Along with his wife, Placidina, Leontius presented gifts of church plate including a chalice and covered the shrine of St Bibianus with silver.¹⁶⁰

Fortunatus composed three poems in celebration of Leontius of Bordeaux's villas.¹⁶¹ These were designed to portray him as a powerful, aristocratic leader proud of his Roman identity and his wealth. In the villa poems Fortunatus revealed his concern to describe the rich natural surroundings of the villas and their importance in providing the bishop with a cultured Roman life-style. At the *villa Bissonum* Leontius restored the building, erecting new baths. Leontius re-established traditional ways of life at the villa and Fortunatus particularly emphasised its lush natural surroundings.¹⁶² Another villa was praised for its ornamental pond with a fountain and fish which were available for the bishop's meals.¹⁶³ This celebration of the rich agricultural produce of the bishop's estate is similar to Alcuin's opening encomium on the richness of the episcopal see of York.

Through York flows the Ouse, its waters teeming with fish,
all about the countryside is lovely with hills and woods,
and this beautiful place of noble setting
was destined to attract many settlers by its richness.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 1.13.

¹⁶⁰ Fortunatus *Opera Poetica* 1.12.13-14, 1.14.1-2.

¹⁶¹ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 1.18, 19, 20.

¹⁶² Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 1.18.

¹⁶³ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 1.19.7-14.

¹⁶⁴ *BKSY* 30-34.

Fortunatus similarly praised Felix of Nantes as a benefactor and builder.¹⁶⁵ His building work was designed to achieve the restoration of a glorious Roman past. In a panegyric addressed to the bishop Fortunatus praised his *Romanitas* claiming ‘in your qualities, Rome lives here anew.’¹⁶⁶ Felix managed to preserve Roman values in a similar environment and context as the bishops and saints of York. His see lay on the frontiers of Armorica which had been colonised by Bretons who had brought with them the customs of the Celtic Church.¹⁶⁷ Felix was thus praised for his adherence to Roman values in an area which like York was subject to Celtic traditions. He built a new cathedral in Nantes and Fortunatus visited the city producing a number of poems recording the dedication ceremony.¹⁶⁸ In a poem intended as an inscription for the wall of the new church Fortunatus drew attention to some of the features of the building. It possessed a soaring dome raised high on arches, a tin-covered roof and a ceiling which caught the light. The cathedral’s splendour outshone the work of Solomon.¹⁶⁹ Fortunatus’ poems praising Felix’s construction work are again similar to Alcuin’s account of Aelberht’s construction of the new basilica in York. There is a similar emphasis upon light.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore

¹⁶⁵ W.C. McDermott, ‘Felix of Nantes: A Merovingian Bishop’, *Traditio* 31 (1975), pp.1-24.

¹⁶⁶ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 3.8.20.

¹⁶⁷ N. Chadwick, ‘The colonisation of Brittany from Celtic Britain’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965), pp.225-99; J.M.H. Smith, *Province and Empire. Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.8-32.

¹⁶⁸ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 3.6, 3.7.

¹⁶⁹ Fortunatus *Opera Poetica* 3.7.31-40, 3.6.1-18.

¹⁷⁰ *BKSY* 1512-13.

a dedication to Sancta Sophia may have arisen from a desire to recall and evoke the work of Solomon who was specifically mentioned in Fortunatus' work. In a letter to Archbishop Eanbald II, Alcuin stated how he had sent the archbishop a gift of a hundred pounds of tin for roofing the belfry.¹⁷¹ Felix's work as a builder also extended to feats of engineering when he diverted the course of a river at his own expense, reclaiming land and laying out a new road.¹⁷²

Venantius Fortunatus also wrote poems praising Gregory of Tours and his role as a benefactor. An episcopal panegyric composed by Fortunatus welcomed Gregory into the city of Tours on his arrival as the new bishop and asked the people of the community to show their approval for him.¹⁷³ Gregory converted a room of the *domus ecclesiae* in Tours as an oratory and installed relics. He also restored the shrine at Artanne, south-east of Tours.¹⁷⁴ The close bond which formed between Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours mirrors the bond between Archbishop Aelberht and Alcuin. Gregory sent small gifts to Fortunatus and provided him with a villa.¹⁷⁵ Both men shared an interest in literary culture. Gregory sent the poet a handbook listing various types of metre with examples and discussion of their use requesting the composition of a poem in reply.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Alcuin's celebration of the library

¹⁷¹ Dümmler no.226, p.370.

¹⁷² Fortunatus Opera Poetica 3.10.

¹⁷³ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 5.3.

¹⁷⁴ Fortunatus Opera Poetica 2.3, 10.5, 10.10.

¹⁷⁵ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 5.13, 8.18, 8.20, 8.21.

¹⁷⁶ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 9.6, 9.7.

at York reveals his concern to praise Aelberht's interest in the promotion of literary scholarship by means of amassing a collection of classical and patristic works. Alcuin considered the library to be so impressive that in a letter written to Charlemagne he expressed how he missed and needed 'some of the rarer learned books which I had in my own country through the devoted efforts of my own teacher and also through some labour on my part.'¹⁷⁷

The bishops of Alcuin's York poem were defenders and protectors of their city as well as its benefactors. Egbert's harmonious relations with his brother, King Eadberht, brought peace and prosperity to York and to Northumbria as a whole. Egbert ruled as *ecclesiae rector* and bestowed treasures upon the poor.¹⁷⁸ Aelberht was praised by means of a series of phrases emphasising his leadership qualities. He was thus *doctor*, *defensor*, a lover of justice, *legis tuba*, a father to orphans and 'comforter of the needy.'¹⁷⁹ He had been marked out by Egbert to act as *defensor* for the entire clergy where he 'watered parched hearts with diverse streams of learning.'¹⁸⁰ He was further praised as *sagax doctor* and *praesul perfectus*.¹⁸¹ Wilfrid II was considered a *rector*.¹⁸² In these roles bishops were praised for their ability to act as local patrons and community leaders, teaching their flock and

¹⁷⁷ Dümmler, no.121, p.177. Trans. S. Allott, *Alcuin of York*, p.12.

¹⁷⁸ *BKSY* 1259.

¹⁷⁹ *BKSY* 1400-1402.

¹⁸⁰ *BKSY* 1430-1432.

¹⁸¹ *BKSY* 1482, 1522.

¹⁸² *BKSY* 1236.

providing charity for the poor. As Wilfrid had appeared as a pious father-like figure in Eddius Stephanus' Life of Wilfrid so Alcuin's bishops were similarly remembered for their fatherly qualities.

It was again in Gaul where bishops had come to develop an expanded role in their urban communities linking them closely to the local aristocracy.¹⁸³ Venantius Fortunatus' Vita Germani described Germanus of Paris as *pater et pastor populi* and presented the bishop as the custodian of his city who had been given the *claves portae parisiacae*.¹⁸⁴ The Vita Albini was written at the request of the reigning bishop of Angers and in it St Albinus was said to have performed his activities *in defensione civium*.¹⁸⁵ In the fifth century Germanus of Auxerre agreed to travel to Arles to appeal to the praetorian prefect when Auxerre faced a particularly high tax assessment. In the 440s he again responded to a request for assistance and in 445 he visited the imperial court in Ravenna. As a consequence he was said to have authority before God and the imperial magistrates.¹⁸⁶ Gregory of Tours demanded that his city be exempt from taxation.¹⁸⁷ When the Huns entered Gaul, Bishop Lupus was said to have protected Troyes by conferring with Attila and then leading

¹⁸³ R. Van Dam, Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul (Berkeley, 1985), pp.84-86, 142-44, 147-49.

¹⁸⁴ Vita Germani parisiaci 12, 76, MGH SRM 7, pp.380, 417.

¹⁸⁵ Vita Albini 9, MGH AA 4.2, p.30.

¹⁸⁶ Constantius, Vita Germani 19, 24, 28, 40, ed. R. Borius, SC 112 (Paris, 1965), pp.160-61, 168-69, 174-77, 196-97.

¹⁸⁷ Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum IX.30, MGH SRM 1, pp.384-385.

his congregation to safety in the hills.¹⁸⁸ Bishop Anianus of Orléans also protected his city from the Huns leading his people in prayer while the barbarians were besieging the city until the Roman general, Aetius, arrived with reinforcements.¹⁸⁹ Aravatus of Tongres travelled to Rome on a diplomatic mission to appeal for support against the Huns.¹⁹⁰

In the Liber in Gloria Confessorum, Gregory of Tours acknowledged the protecting power wielded over cities by a number of episcopal figures. Bordeaux honoured its former bishop St Severinus and the local inhabitants took him as their patron knowing that whenever their city was threatened by illness, besieged by an enemy or disrupted by a vendetta they would be delivered when they prayed at the church of the saint.¹⁹¹ Bishop Memminus of Chalons-sur-Marne was known as a special protector of the city with an ability to perform healing miracles whilst Marcellinus was special patron of Embrun.¹⁹² Trojanus bishop of Saintes was said to be held in great honour by all the citizens of his city. Whenever he journeyed around his diocese, people pulled off threads from his cloak which were able to perform miracles.¹⁹³ Marcellus of Paris was rumoured to have protected his city

¹⁸⁸ Vita Lupi 5-6, MGH SRM 7, pp.297-299.

¹⁸⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, Epistolae VIII.15, ed. W.B. Anderson (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp.491-3; Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum II.7, pp.68-71.

¹⁹⁰ Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum II.5, pp.66-67; Liber in Gloria Confessorum 71, MGH SRM 1.2, p.790.

¹⁹¹ Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Confessorum 44, p.775.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 65, 68, pp.786-788.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58, pp.781-782.

from a dragon.¹⁹⁴ Maximinus of Trier was known as an effective advocate with God on behalf of the people of his city.¹⁹⁵ Both Bishop Nicetius of Trier and Bishop Medard of Soissons possessed posthumous reputations for the ability to free prisoners and those afflicted by demons. A woman with crippled hands was healed by Medard at Soissons during the mass.¹⁹⁶

In late antique and Merovingian Gaul the aristocratic tradition of benefaction extended from the feeding of guests at the table to the feeding of the populace in times of famine. The financial resources of the church appear to have been considerable. A bishop was thus expected to see to the needs of pilgrims and travellers.¹⁹⁷ Caesarius of Arles, described as an apostolic man, was praised for performing many acts of charity. He freed captives, built a hospital and gave alms to the poor and to strangers.¹⁹⁸ Germanus of Auxerre took the destitute under his protection and incurred the toil of long journeys by undertaking to seek remedies for the distress of his diocese. On crossing the Alps he helped a lame and elderly man by carrying his pack for him.¹⁹⁹ Patiens of Lyons emulating a senator travelled

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 87, p.804; Venantius Fortunatus, Vita Marcelli 40-48, MGH AA 4.2, pp.53-54.

¹⁹⁵ Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Confessorum 91, pp.806-807.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 92-93, pp.807-808.

¹⁹⁷ Fortunatus, Opera Poetica 3.3.19-20, 3.13.29-32, 3.15.15-20, 4.3.4-7, 13-14, 4.8.17-26, 5.15, 5.18.

¹⁹⁸ Vita Caesarii I.21, 36, 38, 44; II.8-9, 23-24, MGH SRM 3, pp.465, 470-472, 474, 486-87, 493; W. Klingshirn, 'Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the ransoming of captives in Sub-Roman Gaul', Journal of Roman Studies 75 (1985), pp.183-203; H.G.J. Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century (Rome, 1950), pp.330-31.

¹⁹⁹ Constantius, Vita Germani 24, 31, SC 112, pp.168, 181.

through the neighbouring cities and brought in those who were suffering from starvation.²⁰⁰ The bishop's social and economic importance was thus increased.

The epitaphs which Venantius Fortunatus composed for Merovingian bishops singled out hospitality as the prime episcopal virtue. Cronopius of Périgueux was credited with the ransoming of captives and the ability to repopulate his city.²⁰¹ Chalacterius of Chartres was saluted as *panis egentum*.²⁰² The people of Bordeaux grieved at the death of Leontius of Bordeaux who had provided for the urban poor, women, wayfarers and the sick.²⁰³ Gregory of Langres practiced great abstinence. If the cupbearer offered him water, the bishop ordered him to pour it as if it were wine, choosing a glass which was opaque enough to hide the clarity of the water. He fasted, gave alms, prayed and kept vigils frequently and devoutly.²⁰⁴ When Gallus became bishop of Clermont he was praised for conducting himself with humility and engaging in acts of charity.²⁰⁵ In Fortunatus' *Vita Paterni* the saint behaved in a role commonly accorded to that of the count when he proposed to the king the measures that were to be taken for the poor and the secular official was then ordered by the king to bring into effect whatever the saint might enjoin him to do. When the official failed to do this he was punished by a miracle that placed him in the position of

²⁰⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* II.24, pp.86-87.

²⁰¹ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 4.8.23-24.

²⁰² Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 4.7.13-14.

²⁰³ Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica* 4.9.5-8.

²⁰⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Liber Vitae Patrum* 7.2, MGH SRM 1.2, pp.687-688.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.4, pp.682-683.

suppliant until he fulfilled the orders of the saint.²⁰⁶ Germanus of Paris cured the merchant Damian and his daughter Maria prompting each of the merchants of the city of Nantes to send money to him to be distributed to the poor.²⁰⁷ When the high-ranking Attila, the *domesticus* of the royal palace, was healed by Germanus he produced a purse full of money and a money-belt which he bequeathed to the poor out of gratitude.²⁰⁸

Alcuin and Episcopal Authority: The Question of Audience

Alcuin's poem possesses no preface proclaiming the purpose of the work and its intended audience. It seems clear, however, that, as with his correspondence, he wrote primarily for a religious and secular elite. The York poem is closely related to Alcuin's metrical Life of St Willibrord which was designed as a poetical counterpart to Alcuin's prose Vita of the saint. There are a large number of verbal parallels between the two poems and their verse forms declare them to have been designed for private reading by clerics who possessed the literary skills necessary to understand them.²⁰⁹ The images of scholarly and educated bishops engaged in promoting the fame of a cathedral see and contributing to the stability of the Northumbrian kingdom were therefore chiefly designed to act as moral exemplars for

²⁰⁶ Vita Paterni 15, MGH AA 4.2, p.36.

²⁰⁷ Vita Germani parisiaci 47, MGH SRM 7, p.402.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 60, p.409.

²⁰⁹ BKSY, pp.xliii-xliv. Compare the remarks made concerning Bede's metrical Vita S. Cuthberti in chapter three above.

the *fratres* of York itself rather than to reach a 'popular' audience. As Alcuin's letters reveal these *fratres* were considered to be in need of moral correction and guidance. Furthermore, they were in a position to directly influence the Northumbrian kings whom Alcuin admonished in his letters and hence to put the reforming ideals of the poem into practice.

It is also evident that Alcuin's audience extended beyond the immediate surroundings of York itself although it remained an elite. From the manuscript evidence it is possible that the poem did not reach the continent until the tenth century.²¹⁰ The poem exercised its greatest influence over Aethelwulf who composed the *De Abbatibus*, a work on the lives of the abbots of a monastic community, between 803 and 821.²¹¹ Where Alcuin, influenced by the prose works of hagiography dealing with monastic communities written by Bede and the anonymous author of the *Vita Ceolfridi*, had turned his attention to a cathedral see, Aethelwulf ensured that monks as well as bishops were remembered in verse. There are a number of structural patterns between Aethelwulf's poem and that of Alcuin. Both start with a description of the founding of the religious institution whose history they subsequently narrate and both end with a vision where the former alumni of the school are shown to be rejoicing in heaven. Furthermore Aethelwulf shared a similar interest to Alcuin in ecclesiastical treasures; silver lamps, gold and jewels for the

²¹⁰ R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), p.199.

²¹¹ Aethelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967); M. Lapidge, 'Aedilulf and the School of York', in *Lateinische Kultur im VIII Jahrhundert. Traube-Gedenkschrift*, ed. A. Lehner and W. Berschin (St. Ottilien, 1989), pp.161-178.

altar.²¹² His work was also marked by the strong sense of regionalism and patriotism that characterised Alcuin's poem.

Although the impact of the poem seems on the whole to have been rather limited it did manage to serve an episcopal interest by exalting episcopal saints and showing the bishops of York to be the natural spiritual leaders of their community. Thus although Alcuin had left the cathedral see of York, he continued to publicly affirm the status and dignity it had acquired through the lives of its holy bishops. Alcuin's letters set out practical instructions on the manner in which bishops should behave and stressed that they stood at the forefront of the church as the most important figures within it. The letters were designed to serve a permanently didactic aim since they were to be copied and used as manuals and guides. Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York possessed a collection of Alcuin's letters in the tenth century.²¹³ Both his York poem and his correspondence reveal Alcuin's consistent concern for the episcopal structure of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. For Alcuin bishops, as benefactors and civic patrons, brought order and stability to kingdoms, offered hope and consolation and reminded him of his home.

It is clear that the images of episcopal authority created by non-episcopal writers were all marked by the individual background, milieu and ideological agenda of the authors themselves. These writers were united by their allegiance to insular and continental literary models and forms and the fact that although never rising to

²¹² Aethelwulf, *De Abbatibus* 14, 20, 22, pp.34-38, 48-52, 54-62.

²¹³ *Two Alcuin Letter-Books from the British Museum MS Cotton Vespasian A XIV*, ed. C. Chase (Toronto, 1975), pp.2-3.

the ranks of the episcopate themselves, they were profoundly concerned about the nature of the episcopal organisation of the early Anglo-Saxon Church and the duties of the bishops who composed it. It is, however, now time to allow these bishops to speak for themselves. Thus it is necessary to turn to the self-image of the episcopate found in ecclesiastical legislation.

CHAPTER SIX.

THE SELF-IMAGE OF THE EPISCOPATE IN EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ECCLESIASTICAL LEGISLATION.

'Let us not be the painters of another's image.'¹ Such was the advice offered in one of his sermons by the much-travelled Irish monk Saint Columbanus. This advice could not be heeded by the writers of Anglo-Saxon hagiographical texts who presented textual images of the ideal bishop which have to be viewed through the filter of pious formulae and stereotypes and were created from outside the episcopal community. Yet in examining the image of the episcopate found in the legislation of church councils and other prescriptive literature one discovers that here Columbanus' words could be followed. For in these texts the episcopate spoke with its own voice and bishops themselves generated and controlled the picture which they presented of the nature and function of their role within a newly converted society. Prescriptive literature enables one to examine the episcopate from the inside, to correct the monastic emphasis common in the study of the early Anglo-Saxon Church, and to pinpoint the development of a collective episcopal consciousness which was able to exercise its influence not only upon the life of the church but also upon Anglo-Saxon society as a whole. Through the promulgation of ecclesiastical legislation the episcopate stressed the power of the written word to construct a picture of the ideal bishop and the ideal Christian society. The legislation was practical in its aims. It sought to reform the abuses perceived to be evident within Anglo-Saxon religious life and to impress upon the laity the necessity of living a life in obedience to, and under

¹ Columbanus, *Instructiones* XI, in *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G.S.M. Walker, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* Vol. II (Dublin, 1957), p.108.

the authority of, God, whose people they had become. This concern to consciously accelerate the process of the transition from paganism to Christianity within Anglo-Saxon society and to provide systematic education in the essentials of the Christian faith for both the laity and the clergy points towards the Carolingian reforms of the ninth century and indicates the dynamism and strength of the English Church.² Yet the legislation whilst consciously seeking to operate on a practical level also possessed an ideological significance. It not only bound together the episcopate but also spoke to both the secular and ecclesiastical powers about the authority and position of the episcopate, its power to control the life of the church and its ability to define the nature of the Christian community. This chapter primarily focusses upon the images of the episcopate found within Theodore's Penitential, Egbert of York's Dialogues and councils which are known to have promulgated important sets of canons. It will thus concern itself with the Council of Hertford of 672 or 673, the Council of Clofesho of 747, the synods held under the auspices of the papal legates in 786, the Council of Clofesho of 803 and the Council of Chelsea of 816. Firstly the growth of a conciliar tradition in early Anglo-Saxon England will be examined. It will be shown how under Archbishop Theodore an increased emphasis upon the introduction of greater discipline and consistency in the institutional structure of the Church became evident. This found expression through the attempt to inaugurate a regular series of councils. The chapter will then illustrate the manner in which

² On the Carolingian reforms see R. McKitterick, The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895 (London, 1977); J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (Oxford, 1983), ch.14; C.de Clercq, La Législation religieuse franque de Clovis à Charlemagne, I (Louvain-Paris, 1936), II (Antwerp, 1958); W. Hartmann, Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien (Paderborn, 1989).

through prescriptive literature the episcopate sought to define and direct such aspects of church life as parochial ministry, the nature and function of the monastic life and the instruction of the laity.

Councils or synods were assemblies of bishops and other clergy held to deliberate and legislate on matters pertaining to the church. Their importance was clearly recognised within the Anglo-Saxon Church and was stressed by ecclesiastics both within and outwith the ranks of the episcopate such as Bede, Eddius Stephanus, Aldhelm and Boniface.³ Councils were held, according to Bede, from the moment the Anglo-Saxon Church was born. He recounts the first council, the meeting between Augustine and the British bishops at 'Augustine's Oak', which was marked by the tenacious determination of the British bishops to retain the customs they followed which were contrary to Roman practice.⁴ The outcome of the synod of Whitby is well-known. King Oswiu of Northumbria decided to follow Roman rather than Irish ecclesiastical practices. This did not end the close links between Northumbria and Ireland but it did bring to a close Iona's authority over the Northumbrian Church which had been inaugurated in 635 with Aidan's arrival at Lindisfarne.⁵

Although he was a monk, Theodore was known less for his monastic concerns

³ For Bede's references see HE II.2; III.25; IV.5, 17, 28; V.18; HA 6, 15; VCP 24. Stephanus: VW 10, 24, 30, 34, 46, 60. Aldhelm: De Virginitate, ch.1 in Ehwald, p.229; Letter to Geraint in Ehwald, pp.480-6. Boniface: Letter to Zacharias in Tangl no.50; Letter to Cuthbert archbishop of Canterbury in Tangl no.78; Willibald, Vita Bonifatii, 4, MGH *SRG in usum scholarum* 57.

⁴ HE II.2

⁵ HE III.25, 26; VW 10.

than for his career as an administrator and concern with the episcopal structure of the church in the various English kingdoms.⁶ He sought to reconstruct the diocesan organisation of the church by the assertion of his metropolitan authority. In his mind his appointment as archbishop of Canterbury carried with it full authority over the entire island including the power of ordaining and deposing clergy. At the Council of Hatfield he was styled 'archiepiscopus Britanniae'.⁷ He carried out a programme of restructuring dioceses by dividing existing bishoprics and establishing new episcopal sees in an attempt to create dioceses which were small enough to be administered by one bishop. The exercise of this authority, which provoked the resistance of Wilfrid when Theodore divided the Northumbrian diocese, was marked by an attempt to institute regular church councils. The Council of Hertford of 672 or 673 was presided over by Theodore and attended by bishops who were Theodoran appointments. It sought to set a pattern for future councils by means of its designation of the site of Clofesho as the meeting-place for annual synods.⁸ There is no extant evidence to show that councils were held there on a regular basis in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. However, Clofesho was certainly an ecclesiastical meeting place. The first reliably attested council at Clofesho in 747 was

⁶ N.P. Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester, 1984), pp.71-6 provides a full survey of Theodore's activities.

⁷ Council of Hatfield HE IV.17.

⁸ HE IV.5. ch.7. On the dating of this council see the discussions in W. Levison, England and the Continent in the Eighth Century (Oxford, 1946), p.266; K. Harrison, The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History to AD 900 (Cambridge, 1976), pp.84-5; H. Vollrath, Die Synoden Englands bis 1066 (Paderborn, 1985), p.69; S. Wood, 'Bede's Northumbrian Dates Again', English Historical Review 98 (1983), pp.285-7.

marked by the promulgation of a wide-ranging series of canons under Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, which possessed important links with continental legislation and sought to generate a thorough reform of the English Church.⁹ Clofesho, Chelsea in Middlesex and Aclea in the south east were particularly predominant as synodal sites during the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

It is clear from the evidence that it is necessary to distinguish between synods attended by the metropolitan and the suffragan bishops of his province and smaller diocesan synods. This distinction is evident from canon twenty-five of the Council of Clofesho of 747. This stipulated that bishops were to report the deliberations of synods to their own clergy and if it was found that there was 'anything which a bishop cannot reform in his own diocese' he was to 'lay it before the archbishop in synod.'¹⁰ Before the elevation of the see of York to metropolitan status in 735, Berhtwold, archbishop of Canterbury, convoked a Northumbrian council at Nidd in 706 over which he presided.¹¹ The Papal legates however, held a council in Northumbria in 786 attended by King Aelfwold and Archbishop Eanbald and then promulgated the same decrees at a Southumbrian council before Offa and Jaenberht clearly revealing the fact that separate metropolitan synods were held in Northumbria

⁹ The acts of the council are printed in HS Vol. III, pp.360-76. A full study of them may be found in C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral care and the conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp.193-212; Vollrath, Die Synoden, pp.141-56.

¹⁰ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III, pp.360-376, canon 25, p.371, 'si quid in sua diocesi corrigere et emendare nequiverit, item in synodo coram Archiepiscopo et palam omnibus ad corrigendum insinuet'.

¹¹ VW 60; HE V.19.

after 735.¹²

It appears from the evidence of early charters that separate Southumbrian metropolitan synods were held before this date¹³ and as further charters reveal were particularly common in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

It is clear that church councils were a means by which the episcopal organisation of the early Anglo-Saxon Church could be moulded, constructed and controlled. One aspect of their business concerned the authorisation of the creation and division of sees. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the Council of Chelsea of 787 and notes that it was here that 'Archbishop Jaenberht lost a certain part of his province' as a result of the establishment of a new archbishop, Hygeberht, in the Mercian see of Lichfield.¹⁴ This metropolitan see was also abolished at a council, that of Clofesho in 803.¹⁵ Due to the fact that councils brought together a number of bishops in a single location, they could also be used to consecrate bishops according to the correct canonical rulings. Saint Cuthbert was dragged from 'sweet retirement' to a synod to be consecrated as bishop of Lindisfarne.¹⁶ Earlier the synod of Hertford had legislated that more bishops were to be consecrated as the number of the faithful increased.¹⁷ The creation of a bishopric for the kingdom of the South

¹² Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3, pp.19-29 at pp.20-21, 27.

¹³ S 53 and S 248.

¹⁴ ASC (785 for) 787.

¹⁵ BCS 310.

¹⁶ VCP 24; VCA IV.1.

¹⁷ HE IV.5. ch.9.

Saxons was ordered by a synod. This synod may be the one to which Bishop Wealdhere of London made reference in his letter to Berhtwold, archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁸ In his letter to Bishop Egbert, Bede envisaged that new sees should be created after a 'great council' had been held.¹⁹ Councils also discussed theological issues. The extracts from the acts of the Council of Hatfield preserved by Bede clearly illustrate this. Theodore presided over this council which discussed and affirmed central areas of faith and appealed to ancient canonical tradition. The council also acknowledged the decisions of a council held in Rome by Pope Agatho to prepare for the sixth General Council at Constantinople which condemned the Monophysites and Monotheletism.²⁰

A central concern of Anglo-Saxon church councils was judicial. They were held to settle disputes arising over ecclesiastical property and were used as forums for the witnessing of agreements made privately between parties.²¹ This meant that

¹⁸ HE V.18; BCS 115; P. Chaplais, 'The Letter from Bishop Wealdhere of London to Archbishop Brihtwold of Canterbury: The Earliest Original "Letter Close" extant in the West', in Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N.R. Ker, ed. M.B. Parkes and A.G. Watson (London, 1978), pp.3-23 at p.22.

¹⁹ Bede, Epistola ad Egbertum, in Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), vol.1, p.413.

²⁰ HE IV.17.

²¹ See for example S 1257 (record of settlement of a dispute between King Offa and Heathored bishop of Worcester at the Council of Brentford 781). This synod, where Offa claimed the monastery at Bath is discussed in P. Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature in Western England 600-800 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.159-65; S 1430 (record of settlement of a dispute involving Heathored, bishop of Worcester, at the Council of Chelsea 789); S 1258 (record of settlement of a dispute between Aethelheard, archbishop of Canterbury, and Cynethryth abbess over land at Cookham in Berkshire at Council of Clafesho 798); S 1433 (record of settlement of a dispute between Heahberht, bishop of Worcester, and the community at Berkeley, Gloucs. concerning land at Westbury-on-Trym at Council of

they could be attended by laymen as well as clergy and discussed matters of secular as well as of ecclesiastical concern. In the eighth and early ninth centuries gatherings of all the bishops south of the Humber were attended by the Mercian king. However, the presence and participation of laymen does not invalidate the concept of 'church councils' although it does raise the important issue of who controlled and convened such assemblies. Accounts of councils found in hagiographical texts perceived the clergy at the forefront of the meetings. Eddius Stephanus' account of the synod held under Archbishop Berhtwold at Nidd shows that the synod was convoked by the archbishop. The king's deputy stated the will of the king that Wilfrid should have parts of the churches he formerly ruled restored to him but the bishops still deliberated to reach their own decision.²² Royal authority appears to have been much stronger at local than at provincial synods. During the eighth century the Mercian kings came to exercise power over almost the whole of the ecclesiastical province of Southumbria and could participate in the convocation of synods held in their presence.²³ However, this did not mean that the long established right of the

Clofesho 824). This dispute is discussed by P. Wormald, 'Charters, Law and the settlement of disputes in Anglo-Saxon England', in The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe, ed. P. Fouracre and W. Davies (Cambridge, 1986), pp.149-68; S 1436 (record of settlement of a dispute between Wulfred, archbishop of Canterbury and Cenwulf, king of Mercia concerning the minsters at Reculver and Minster at Council of Clofesho 825); S 1437 (record of settlement of a dispute concerning swine pasture at Sinton in Leigh, Worcs. also at Council of Clofesho 825) and S 1435 (record of settlement of a dispute concerning land at Denton in Sussex again at Clofesho in 825). Vollrath, Die Synoden, pp.132-41 argues that synods were the customary courts for settling disputes over church land.

²² VW 60.

²³ S 1258, where Archbishop Aethelheard states that he convoked the synod with King Cenwulf; S 155, a synod held at the Mercian royal centre, Tamworth.

Archbishop of Canterbury to bring together his suffragans in council was terminated. It seems clear that secular control of councils was affected by a distinction which was made between councils which discussed purely ecclesiastical questions and those which sought to settle disputes where the king as a guarantor of property rights was involved.²⁴ This can be seen in the range of documents recording the synod of Clofesho of 803. Four separate items of business were recorded at this council and each survived as a separate document. King Cenwulf and his magnates witnessed a lease of land granted by Deneberht the bishop of Worcester to a layman Wulfheard, preserved in the Worcester archive, but three other documents from the council bear only clerical attestations.²⁵ These are concerned with a property dispute between two bishops, Deneberht of Worcester and Wulfheard of Hereford, involving episcopal rights over two monasteries²⁶, a ban on lay lordship of monasteries issued in the name of Aethelheard, Archbishop of Canterbury²⁷ and the abolition of the metropolitan see of Lichfield.²⁸ Thus it appears that bishops gathered in council could restrict the degree of lay participation and give judgement without the king.²⁹ This affirms the fact that in church councils one largely hears the voice and sees the

²⁴ C. Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-c.850' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990), p.67.

²⁵ S 1260.

²⁶ S 1431.

²⁷ BCS 312; Brooks, Church of Canterbury, p.179.

²⁸ BCS 310.

²⁹ See S 1439 (record of a Kentish dispute at the Council of Aclea which refers to the authority of the archbishop in judgement); S 1187 which refers to the authority of the bishop of Worcester.

activities of bishops themselves and it illustrates the political significance of bishops in council.

This contrasts with the situation in Visigothic Spain where Church councils appear to have been more controlled by the king and influenced by secular concerns. From the third council of Toledo onwards, kings attended councils and were on occasion armed with spiritual weapons to use against their enemies.³⁰ From XII Toledo onwards it became standard for the deliberations of a council to begin with the practice of kings delivering a tome or written speech which denoted issues the monarch wanted the bishops to discuss. In no case did bishops dare to disregard the instructions set out in such royal tomes.³¹ Furthermore V Toledo held in 636 was concerned exclusively with matters pertaining to the king and to royal authority.

Church councils reveal the importance of the written word to the episcopate. Their decrees functioned as a means by which bishops could assert their authority to establish themselves and the church within the physical and social dimensions of the community. They were able to establish an intellectual tradition where bishops took a central role in the Christian education of the English people. By consciously participating in the Christianisation of English society the bishops sought to prove that they were the living embodiment of Christian precepts. Concern with the ability of the written word to mould and construct episcopal power finds expression in the manner in which synodal documents were drafted. In constructing synodal

³⁰ V Toledo canons 2, 4, 5; VI Toledo canons 12, 17, 18, in Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos, ed. J. Vives (Barcelona and Madrid, 1963), pp.227-229, 241, 244-45.

³¹ E.A. Thompson, The Goths in Spain (Oxford, 1969), p.281.

documents, the bishops looked back to the diplomatic procedure employed by the councils of the early Church. They would often follow the Roman and Greek practice of including direct speech within their accounts to give the recording of conciliar proceedings the form of a dramatic report. The pattern established by Theodore at the synod of Hertford whereby the date of the council, its location and the names of those who attended were set down before the business of the council was discussed served as a model for the recording of future councils. At this council Theodore 'dictated to Titill the notary the wording of the decisions for him to write down.'³²

The canons of councils were preserved in episcopal handbooks providing a source for reference and guidance. The canons of the Council of Clofesho of 747 were originally preserved in an eighth-century manuscript containing other documents useful to bishops: extracts from Gregory the Great's Liber Regulae Pastoralis, a letter of Boniface written to Archbishop Cuthbert and a grant of privileges made to the Church by Aethelbald of Mercia at the council of Gumley in 749.³³ Canons could also be published in epistolary form. This is evident from the correspondence addressed by Boniface to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury and Egbert of York requesting an exchange of conciliar material.³⁴ In the tenth century, Archbishop Oda incorporated parts of the decrees of the Legatine Synods into his Chapters which

³² HE IV.5.

³³ London, British Library Cotton MS, Otho, A.1. CLA II, no. 188. The letter of Boniface is Tangl no.78. The privilege of Gumley is S 92 and is discussed by N. Brooks, 'The development of military obligations in eighth-and ninth-century England', in England Before the Conquest, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp.69-84 at pp.76-8.

³⁴ Tangl nos. 75 and 78, pp.156-58, 161-70.

suggests that they were preserved in England as well as on the continent.³⁵ The Council of Chelsea of 816 stressed the importance of the written record to enhance the corporate authority of bishops acting together in synod. Canon nine discussed the manner in which synodal judgements should be drafted instructing that bishops make and keep records of judgments concerning their own diocese. Canon seven cautioned bishops and abbots to preserve the written evidence of their title to land as a defence against fraudulent claims. The council also reveals the concern of the episcopate to look back to the tradition of early church councils. Its eighth decree appealed to the authority of ancient canonical tradition by citing the twenty-fourth canon of the council of Chalcedon.³⁶

The Functions of Bishops and the Power of Archbishops

Through the promulgation of ecclesiastical legislation, bishops sought to define and delineate the nature of their office communicating their deliberations both to those abbots, clergy and laity present at councils, and to those who experienced the enactment of their legislation.³⁷ The extant canons of councils stressed the need for

³⁵ G. Schoebe, 'The chapters of Archbishop Oda and the canons of the Legatine Council of 786', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 35 (1962), pp.75-83; Councils and Synods with other Documents Relating to the English Church AD 871-1216 (Oxford, 1981), vol. 1, ed. D. Whitelock et al. no.20, pp.67-74. For a further influence on the Regularis Concordia see T. Symons, 'Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation', in Tenth-Century Studies, ed. D. Parsons (Chichester, 1975), pp.37-59 at p.44.

³⁶ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III, pp.579-85. The use of the wording of the Council of Chalcedon is discussed by Brooks, Church of Canterbury, p.176.

³⁷ The attendance at synods is discussed in C. Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils', ch.1. Abbots were not explicitly mentioned among those present at the Council of Hertford of 672/3 which was attended by bishops with 'many teachers of the church', HE IV.5. They

bishops to cultivate an ideal of unity amongst themselves, that 'though they are far distant in sees..they may be joined together in mind by one Spirit, serving God in faith, hope and charity.'³⁸ The Council of Chelsea of 816 sought to cultivate the corporate authority of bishops in council by ruling that their judgement should be inviolable.³⁹ Bishops were to take an active role in the Christianisation of society. At the Council of Clofesho of 747 the ideal bishop was instructed to fulfil a pedagogical function as a preacher responsible to the flock committed to his charge. He was to 'instruct them by the preaching of sound doctrine' and to 'be adorned with good manners, with the virtues of abstinence, with works of righteousness, and with learned studies, that he 'may be able to reform the people of God.'⁴⁰ He was to 'call to him at convenient places the people of every condition and sex, and plainly teach them who rarely hear the word of God.'⁴¹ Furthermore, a bishop was to be appointed to a specific diocese and his authority in that diocese was not to be violated. No bishop was to invade the diocese of another⁴² and the bishop's authority

were also not mentioned at the Council of Clofesho of 747 attended by 'many priests of the Lord' and 'those of the ecclesiastical order in lesser dignities', HS III, p.362. They were, however, among the signatories of the Legatine Synods, Dümmler, no.3, p.29, and also present at the Council of Clofesho of 803 and the Council of Chelsea of 816, HS III, pp.546-7, 586. Theodore's Penitential legislated that 'a bishop ought not to compel an abbot to go to a synod unless there is some sound reason', HS III, II.ii.3, p.191.

³⁸ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 2, p.363. Note also Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 14, p.25; Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 3, p.580.

³⁹ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 6, p.581.

⁴⁰ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 1, p.363.

⁴¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 3, pp.363-4.

⁴² Council of Hertford HE IV.5 ch 2. Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 11, p.584.

over the consecration of churches in his own diocese was to be protected.⁴³ He should visit his diocese every year 'by travelling through it, going about, and making an inspection into it.'⁴⁴ Theodore stipulated that bishops alone could confirm, ordain priests and abbots and consecrate the holy oils used in anointing the sick.⁴⁵ Egbert imposed a strict hierarchical order among the clergy. He ruled that questions concerning the property of monks and nuns should be reserved to the judgment of bishops and severely attempted to punish those who attempted to regain property by other means.⁴⁶ A bishop was to judge those committing offences against monks and lower ranking *clerici*.⁴⁷

Bishops clearly wished to convey an image of the episcopal office which emphasised the dignity and power attached to it. This is evident from the tenth canon of the Council of Chelsea of 816 which stipulated that when a bishop died, a third of his goods were to be distributed to the poor and his English slaves were to be freed. Thirty psalms were to be said by all churches in every diocese and each abbot and bishop was to mark the death with one hundred and twenty masses and sixty recitations of the psalter. The thirtieth day after the dead bishop's departure was to be kept as though it were a feast of one of the Apostles perhaps to emphasise the

⁴³ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 2 p.580, canon 11, p.584.

⁴⁴ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 3, pp.363-64. Cf. Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 3, pp.21-2.

⁴⁵ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.iii.2, 5, 8, iv.5, pp.192-3.

⁴⁶ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.10, pp.407-8.

⁴⁷ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.iv.5, p.180.

historical tradition which linked the episcopate with the Apostles.⁴⁸ This canon is strongly linked to the instructions given by Archbishop Wulfred in a charter granted to the *familia* of Christ Church, Canterbury which stated that in return for such a gift, the community should aid his soul by alms-giving, psalm-singing and the celebration of masses.⁴⁹ It is possible that it belonged to a general reform of the Christ Church community inspired by the reforms of Chrodegang of Metz and designed to emphasise its corporate chanting and worship.⁵⁰

The report of the council conducted by the papal legates, George of Ostia and Theophylact of Todi, stressed the political significance of the episcopate. It was addressed, like Carolingian legislation, to both laymen and clerics and advocated a view of the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular power derived from the ideas of the fifth century pope, Gelasius I. In a letter to Emperor Anastasius, Gelasius had expounded the theory that there were two powers which governed the world, the 'consecrated authority of bishops' and the 'royal power.' Each was a trust from God, sovereign and independent in its own sphere, but the spiritual authority was inherently superior since it provided for the salvation of the temporal and

⁴⁸ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 10, pp.583-4. Compare the comment of Eddius Stephanus who notes that after Wilfrid's death, Acca resolved to celebrate mass each day for the saint and every week to keep the day of his death as a Sunday. He determined to divide his whole share of the tithes of his flocks and herds to the poor each year on the anniversary of Wilfrid's death and in addition to his daily alms-giving for his own soul and that of his former bishop, VW 65.

⁴⁹ S 1268.

⁵⁰ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.156-7.

bishops would give an account of the conduct of kings on the Day of Judgement.⁵¹ Canon eleven of the report admonished kings and princes that they should 'judge righteously', 'have wise counsellors' and 'from their heart with great humility obey their bishops, because the kingdom of heaven is committed to them, and they have the power of binding and loosing.'⁵² If kings were to obey bishops, however, bishops were also to honour kings for they were 'the Lord's anointed' appointed by God for the correction of evil. A bishop who consented to the crime of regicide was to be cast out like Judas to 'burn in everlasting fire.'⁵³ It has been argued that this canon in particular indicates that the Legatine report was directed towards the political problems prevalent in Northumbria chronicled by the York Annals which record murders, plots, conspiracies of various aristocratic factions and the ruthless elimination of rivals.⁵⁴ The concern which the report showed concerning the nature of royal authority reveals the influence not only of Gelasian ideas but also of the seventh-century Irish treatise, Pseudo-Cyprian's De duodecim abusivis saeculi. The

⁵¹ Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae, ed. A. Thiel (Brunswick, 1858) no.12, I, pp.350-1; A.K. Ziegler, 'Pope Gelasius I and his teaching on the relation of Church and State', Catholic Historical Review 27 (1942), pp.412-37; W. Ullmann, Medieval Political Thought (London, 1965), ch.1.

⁵² Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 11, p.23.

⁵³ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 12, pp.23-4.

⁵⁴ Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. T. Arnold (RS 75 London, 1882-5) Vol. 2, pp.31-66. Translated in Whitelock EHD, pp.239-254. On the York Annals see P. Hunter Blair, 'Some Observations on the Historia Regum attributed to Symeon of Durham', in Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border, ed. N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963), pp.63-118 and M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the Historia Regum attributed to Symeon of Durham', Anglo-Saxon England 10 (1981), pp.72-122. For the view that the report was primarily directed towards Northumbria see Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils', ch.7.

ninth chapter of this treatise concerned the qualities of the unjust king and emphasised that a just king was to govern with wise counsellors, to defend churches and to protect orphans and widows.⁵⁵ The Gelasian element within the report clearly illustrates the manner in which the bishops sought to emphasise the power and political importance attached to their office. When Oda of Canterbury used parts of the Legatine decrees in his Chapters he toned down their overtly Gelasian standpoint.⁵⁶ Perhaps the bishops of the tenth century were more deferential to the power of kings.

Episcopal texts emphasised that hierarchical organisation was a characteristic feature of the Anglo-Saxon Church. All the councils which promulgated major sets of canons were attended by an archbishop. Theodore's exalted conception of the nature of archiepiscopal office found expression in his concern to hold councils on a regular yearly basis at Clofesho⁵⁷ and would have been further enhanced through the attribution of a Penitential to his name. The text was probably a mid eighth-century compilation embodying a tradition which went back to Theodore. It therefore did not represent 'a simple dogmatic promulgation of a monolithic orthodoxy'⁵⁸ yet despite its mixed nature, its association with Theodore would have kept his name

⁵⁵ Pseudo-Cyprianus de XII abusivis saeculi, ed. S. Hellmann, in Texte und Untersuchungen, ed. A. Harnack and C. Schmidt, 34.1 (Leipzig, 1909).

⁵⁶ Schoebe, 'The chapters of Archbishop Oda'.

⁵⁷ Council of Hertford HE IV.5 ch.7.

⁵⁸ S. Hollis, Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church (Woodbridge, 1992), p.51.

prominent in the eighth century.⁵⁹ With the elevation of the see of York to metropolitan status, the provincial synods held in the presence of the archbishop of Canterbury were only attended by clergy from sees south of the Humber and the archbishop was no longer styled 'archiepiscopus Britanniae' as Theodore had been at the Council of Hatfield.⁶⁰ Further concern to develop the authority of the metropolitan see of Canterbury was evident at the Council of Clofesho of 747. Canon twenty-five directly concerned itself with the relationship between the archbishop and his suffragan bishops distinguishing between diocesan and provincial synods and thereby establishing the archbishop's position at the head of a hierarchy.⁶¹

The Council of Clofesho was closely linked to a letter written by Boniface to Archbishop Cuthbert which was essentially concerned with the nature of the archbishop's office and declared 'our responsibility toward churches and peoples is greater than that of other bishops on account of the pallium entrusted to us.'⁶² The council also sought to stress the historical tradition underlying Canterbury's metropolitan status. It sought to ensure that the festivals of two of Canterbury's

⁵⁹ P. Meyvaert, 'Bede's Text of the Libellus Responsionum of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', in England Before the Conquest, ed. Clemoes and Hughes, pp.15-33 asserts that the Penitential circulated in England with the text of the Libellus Responsionum that Bede incorporated in HE and that both texts were disseminated from Canterbury.

⁶⁰ Council of Hatfield HE IV.17.

⁶¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 25, p.371.

⁶² Tangl no. 78, pp.161-70. This letter of Boniface's along with a letter of admonition to King Aethelbald of Mercia (Tangl no. 73, pp.146-55) possessed a separate English transmission outside continental manuscripts, see M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the Vita S. Ecgwini', Medieval Studies 41 (1979), pp.331-53 at pp.344-5; Levison, England and the Continent, pp.280-1.

central mentors, Gregory the Great and Augustine, were regularly kept.⁶³ The Council of Clofesho of 803 which abolished Offa's scheme for a metropolitan see at Lichfield, fought the king's plan with a similar appeal to historical tradition. The seat of the archbishop was never to be 'in any other place but the city of Canterbury, where Christ Church is, and where the catholic faith first shone forth in this island, and where holy baptism was first celebrated by Saint Augustine.'⁶⁴ The collapse of Offa's scheme led to a renewed assertion of power by the metropolitan see of Canterbury found in the Council of Chelsea.

The concern of Wulfred to strengthen the authority of the episcopate and the metropolitan see of Canterbury in particular is found in canon five of the Council of Chelsea. This denounced wandering Irish bishops and claimed that canon law cast doubts on the validity of their ordinations because they possessed no metropolitan and episcopal hierarchy.⁶⁵ Canon eleven contrasted the authority of the archbishop with his suffragan bishops, asserting his position at the head of a hierarchy. Bishops could not perform consecrations in another diocese, only the archbishop could claim this right for he stood at the head of the bishops.⁶⁶ Wulfred's interest in strengthening the separate identity of the Southumbrian episcopate at this council should be examined alongside the practice whereby bishops or bishops-elect made professions

⁶³ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 17, p.368.

⁶⁴ Council of Clofesho 803 HS III, pp.541-4 at p.543.

⁶⁵ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 5, p.581.

⁶⁶ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 11, p.584.

of faith and obedience to the archbishops of Canterbury.⁶⁷ These professions of obedience were often made in terms reminiscent of secular oaths of fealty and show how Canterbury wished to be seen as a powerful centre of archiepiscopal control.⁶⁸ It is noticeable that amongst the twenty-nine extant professions, one form of profession was used eight times. This makes it probable that the professions were composed at Canterbury and thus again illustrates the manner in which the metropolitan see sought to proclaim its authority.⁶⁹ Further evidence of the promotion of archiepiscopal power is provided by the fact that from the reign of Offa of Mercia, the archbishops of Canterbury issued their own coinage. In allowing Archbishops Jaenberht and Aethelheard to issue coinage with their names as well as his, Offa followed the example of Eadberht of Northumbria whose coinage included a joint issue with his brother Egbert, Archbishop of York.⁷⁰ After the death of Aethelheard, portraits are found on archiepiscopal coins. Wulfred's first issue was marked by a tonsured portrait perhaps inspired by the papal coin issued by Hadrian I who died in 795.⁷¹ The bishops in episcopal texts believed it was their right and their duty to mould society according to their ideals to ensure that the Anglo-Saxon

⁶⁷ Canterbury Professions, ed. M. Richter (Canterbury and York Society 67, 1973).

⁶⁸ Richter, Professions, no.28.

⁶⁹ Richter, Professions, nos. 8, 11, 14, 15, 20, 22, 26, 29. For a fuller discussion of these professions which points out further passages and phrases linking the texts see Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.165-67.

⁷⁰ I. Stewart, 'The London mint and the coinage of Offa', in Anglo-Saxon Monetary History, ed. M.A.S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), p.42.

⁷¹ C.E. Blunt, C.S.S. Lyon and B.H.I.H. Stewart, 'The Coinage of Southern England 796-840', British Numismatic Journal 32 (1963), pp.1-74 at p.19, p.40; H. Pagan, 'Coinage in southern England 796-874', in Anglo-Saxon Monetary History, ed. Blackburn, pp.45-65.

Church was marked by a desire for understanding the Christian faith and promoting truly Christian behaviour. They thus expressed an interest in the structure and form of parochial ministry.

Bishops and Parochial Ministry

In episcopal texts bishops conceived that the nature and control of parochial ministry was their own exclusive prerogative. Legislative texts concerning the provision of parochial ministry and the organisation of pastoral care show the preoccupation of diocesan bishops with the priesthood. Priests were to play the most active role in ministering to the laity. Bishops were to appoint priests to minister to the laity within a specific area⁷² where they were to baptise, teach, preach and prescribe penance.⁷³ Although the reconciliation of penitents was perceived to be a task to be undertaken by the episcopate, if it was difficult for them to perform it bishops could confer this authority on priests.⁷⁴ Priests were also to be instrumental in providing pastoral care within *monasteria* subject to the 'tyrannical covetousness' of lay lordship so that 'what is already in a declining state be not further risked for want of the ministry of a priest.'⁷⁵ The priesthood was to be reformed through the regular examination of

⁷² Council of Clonfesho 747 HS III, canon 9, p.365. Legatine Synod 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 6, p.22. Council of Chelsea 816 HS III, canon 11, p.584.

⁷³ Council of Clonfesho 747 HS III canons 8, 9, 11, pp.365-6; Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.ii.15, p.192.

⁷⁴ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.xiii.2-3, p.187.

⁷⁵ Council of Clonfesho 747 HS III canon 5, p.364.

its moral and educational standards by the episcopate.⁷⁶ Bishops were instructed not to ordain any monk or cleric to the priesthood until they had investigated the candidate's character, probity of manners and knowledge of the faith, and ensured that he was sufficiently learned to preach, give knowledge of the word and enjoin penance to others.⁷⁷ Egbert's Dialogues dealt with the qualities required for ordination. Candidates were to be free from disability and servility, and not to have previously committed various crimes or done public penance.⁷⁸ Theodore's Penitential prescribed penances for priests polluted by sexual sins and drunkenness.⁷⁹ A priest who, having been examined, was found to be corrupt and removed from office was not permitted to minister in the diocese of another until his dispute with his own diocesan was settled.⁸⁰

In the decrees of the Council of Clofesho priests were exhorted to 'desist from secular business and causes...and to discharge their duty at the altar and in divine service with the utmost application.'⁸¹ They were to spend their time in 'reading, celebration of masses and psalmody',⁸² and were not to 'declaim in church like

⁷⁶ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 6, p.364. Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 1, p.21, canon 6, p.22.

⁷⁷ Council of Clofesho HS III canon 6, p.364. Cf. Legatine Synods, Dümmler, no.3 canon 6, p.22.

⁷⁸ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.15, p.410.

⁷⁹ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.i, viii.1-4, ix.1, 4-6, pp.177-8, 183-4, 184-5.

⁸⁰ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.4, p.405.

⁸¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 8, p.365.

⁸² Ibid.

secular poets.’⁸³ In the places and districts assigned to them by bishops they were to ‘take care to discharge the duty of the apostolic commission, in baptising, teaching and visiting’ and were to refrain from obscene talking and drunkenness.⁸⁴ They were also instructed to perform ‘every sacerdotal ministry, everywhere in the same fashion.’⁸⁵ The tenth canon of the Council of Clofesho was concerned to enact legislation which had been advocated by Bede in his Letter to Egbert, to ensure that priests may ‘learn to construe and explain in their own tongue, the Creed and Lord’s Prayer.’⁸⁶ Priests were also instructed to learn what the sacraments ‘visibly performed in the Mass, Baptism and other ecclesiastical offices’ spiritually signified.⁸⁷ Thus the bishops in council envisaged the priesthood as a reflection of themselves: learned, unified⁸⁸, fulfilling a pedagogical function in a specific area and characterised by a certain manner of living although priests were not to presume ‘or attempt in any ways to perform any of those things which are peculiar to bishops in some of the ecclesiastical offices.’⁸⁹

Several episcopal texts expressed anxiety about the pastoral activities of priests who worked independently of episcopal control. The efficacy of the ministry of those

⁸³ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 12, p.366.

⁸⁴ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 9, pp.365-366.

⁸⁵ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 11, p.366.

⁸⁶ Bede, Epistola ad Egbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.408-9. Trans Whitelock, EHD, no. 170, p.737; Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 10, p.366.

⁸⁷ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 10, p.366.

⁸⁸ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 11, p.366.

⁸⁹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 12, pp.366-7.

who had not been canonically ordained according to English standards was called into question. Objections were levied against the ministry of foreigners who were ordained without any particular charge.⁹⁰ Legislation promulgated at Clofesho in 747, by the Legatine Synods of 786 and at Chelsea in 816 attempted to deal with the problem of wandering clergy.⁹¹ The Council of Chelsea of 816 stipulated that the only functions that priests were permitted to perform without specific episcopal permission were baptism and the visitation of the sick. Any priest who refused to perform the ministry of baptism through negligence was to cease from his ministry until he was reconciled to his bishop.⁹²

Edicts of church councils and other prescriptive literature of episcopal provenance thus focussed upon the control of parochial workers by bishops and viewed such workers as members of the ordained clergy primarily priests. Below the priesthood were deacons who once ordained, like bishops and priests, were forbidden to marry and had a more limited role in the administration of the sacraments than the priesthood. They could not say mass and were forbidden to prescribe penances for the laity.⁹³ This image of an exclusively episcopal control of parochial ministry reveals the development of an episcopal consciousness which can be traced through conciliar activity but it has been questioned how far it was more of an ideal than a

⁹⁰ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.9, p.407.

⁹¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 29, pp.374-5; Legatine Synods Dümmler, no.3 canon 6, p.22; Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 5, p.581.

⁹² Council of Chelsea 816 HS III, Canon 11, p.584.

⁹³ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.vi.4, ix.1-4, II.ii.14-16, pp.182, 184-5, 192.

reality.

Recently historians have reconsidered the question of the provision and organisation of pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England.⁹⁴ Perceiving no distinction between churches following a regular life and committed to ascetic practices and secular churches not bound by a rule and committed to pastoral work, they have sought to examine the nature of monastic communities and suggested that these possessed pastoral responsibilities alongside those shown to be possessed by the priesthood and other ordained clergy organised by the episcopate. According to John Blair 'all or most establishments called *monasteria* either performed or supported pastoral work within defined territories.'⁹⁵ Given the immensity of many early dioceses and the distances to be travelled it seems possible that this could have had some basis in reality.⁹⁶ However, it is uncertain exactly how this role was fulfilled

⁹⁴ Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992); J. Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', in Domesday Book: A Reassessment, ed. P. Sawyer (London, 1985), pp.104-42; Id., 'Local Churches in Domesday Book and Before', in Domesday Studies, ed. J.C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1987), pp.265-78; Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950-1200, ed. J. Blair (Oxford, 1988); S. Foot, 'Parochial ministry in early Anglo-Saxon England: the role of monastic communities', Studies in Church History 26 (Oxford, 1989), pp.43-54; A.T. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, pp.137-70; C. Brooke, 'Rural Ecclesiastical Institutions in England: The Search for their Origins', Settimane 28 (1982), pp.685-711; G. Constable, 'Monasteries, rural churches and the *cura animarum* in the early Middle Ages', *Ibid.*, pp.349-89; T.L. Amos, 'Monks and Pastoral Care in the Early Middle Ages', in Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages, ed. T.F.X. Noble and J.J. Contreni (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1987), pp.165-80.

⁹⁵ J. Blair, Minsters and Parish Churches, p.1.

⁹⁶ On the size of early dioceses see the remarks of Bede in the Epistola ad Ecgbertum. For an attempt to distinguish between pastoral and more purely contemplative monastic

or what form it took. Those who advocate that *monasteria* fulfilled a pastoral role within defined territories have been dependent on the evidence for later parochial boundaries which they have used to make assumptions about the nature of early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical sites.⁹⁷ It is, however, difficult to demonstrate that the mother churches with wide parochial authority in the eleventh and twelfth centuries can be traced back to networks of churches founded at *villae regales* in the seventh century. A new church could have been founded on a site formerly occupied by an earlier church and thereby create a spurious impression of continuity.

The argument which advocates that monastic communities possessed an extensive role in the exercise of parochial ministry is largely based upon contrasting episcopal texts with Bede's 'austerely monastic'⁹⁸ conception of pastoral theology. In discussing the concept of pastoral care, Bede drew heavily upon the writings of Gregory the Great. In his writings Gregory had constructed a floating context of pastoral authority. He had dispensed with the normal terminology used to describe pastors and replaced it with vague references to 'sacred rulers', 'preachers' and 'teachers' which by stressing that spiritual authority was not to be equated with ecclesiastical office generated uncertainty about the nature of leadership within the

communities on the basis of topographical and archaeological evidence see E. Cambridge, 'The Early Church in County Durham: A Reassessment', Journal of the British Archaeological Association 137 (1984), pp.65-85.

⁹⁷ P.H. Hase, 'The Mother Churches of Hampshire', in Minsters and Parish Churches, ed. J. Blair, pp.45-66; J. Croom, 'The Fragmentation of the Minster *Parochiae* of South-East Shropshire', *Ibid.*, pp.67-81; M.J. Franklin, 'The identification of Minsters in the Midlands', Anglo-Norman Studies 7: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1984, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge, 1985), pp.69-88.

⁹⁸ Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', p.160.

church. These *praedicatores* and *rectores* could not be simply identified as priests or bishops.⁹⁹ In his works Bede therefore showed a similar concern for the functions and activities of a spiritual elite, the *sancti doctores* and *praedicatores*, who may or may not be ordained. He possessed a broad conception of the term pastor applying it to all the faithful.

For this purpose especially have spiritual pastors of the church been ordained, to preach the mysteries of the word of God and show their hearers, that they may also marvel, the wonders which they have learnt in the Scriptures. As pastors are understood not only bishops, priests and deacons but also the rulers of *monasteria*, also all the faithful who take charge even of small households should rightly be called pastors in as much as they have charge over their households with ceaseless vigilance.¹⁰⁰

This does not, however, automatically imply that Bede envisaged the exercise of parochial ministry by monastic communities as the norm. It rather illustrates how Bede possessed a wide-ranging view of the nature of pastoral care. His view differed from that of the episcopate because it was broader in scope. Episcopal texts largely equated pastoral care with preaching, the imposition of penance and the administration of the sacraments to the people of the locality. Bede, however, thought

⁹⁹ J. McClure, 'Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Audience', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1976), pp.38-40, 46-50, 83-5, 106-08, 120-1, 124-31, 237-40; C. Leyser, 'The Monastic Thought and Culture of Pope Gregory the Great in their Western Context c.400-604', (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1991), pp.16-17, 336.

¹⁰⁰ Bede, *Opera Homiletica*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, p.49. '...quia et spirituales ecclesiae pastores in hoc maxime sunt ordinati ut uerbi Dei mysteria praedicent et mira quae in scripturis didicerint miranda suis auditoribus ostendant. Non solum pastores episcopi presbyteri diaconi uel etiam rectores monasteriorum sunt intellegendi sed et omnes fideles qui uel paruulae suae domus custodiam gerunt pastores recte uocantur in quantum eidem suae domui sollicita uigilantia praesunt.' On Bede's views on this theme see A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* ed. P. Wormald et al. (Oxford, 1983), pp.130-53 and H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, The Rule of St Benedict and Social Class* (Jarrow Lecture, 1976).

of it in terms of a wider range of activities which could be performed by the laity as well as by monks in the *monasteria*. For him it could encompass activities such as providing succour to one's neighbour, giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, providing clothing for the cold, sheltering the destitute and homeless, visiting the sick, helping the needy and poor from the attacks of violent robbers, engaging in manual labour or meditation on the scriptures and showing the way of truth to those in error.¹⁰¹ It is therefore possible that the activities of the *doctores* and *praedicatores* were directed to those within religious communities rather than to the laity outside them. In this manner monasteries may have attended to tenants and patrons without possessing organised pastoral responsibilities over defined areas forming a system of ecclesiastical organisation. In the description of the house of monks which was a dependent cell of Lindisfarne in Aethelwulf's poem De Abbatibus monks are praised for acts of charity to the poor such as almsgiving but there is no mention of them preaching or administering the sacraments to the laity.¹⁰² Abbess Hild of Whitby enjoined all the members of her community to devote time to the performance of good works but it is uncertain exactly what form these took.¹⁰³ Furthermore, contact between monastic communities and the laity was often not the result of monks travelling around the surrounding countryside but rather

¹⁰¹ Bede, In Cantica Canticorum IV.vi.9, ed. D. Hurst CCSL 119B, p.312; Opera Homiletica, p.64; M.T.A. Carroll, The Venerable Bede and his Spiritual Teachings (Washington, 1946), p.229.

¹⁰² Aethelwulf, De Abbatibus, 7, 13, 15, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967), pp.16-19, 32-35, 38-41.

¹⁰³ HE IV.23.

of lay persons coming to a monastic community for a specific purpose.

Monastic communities were intended to receive visitors. Abbess Hild at Whitby regularly received visitors seeking her advice. Ordinary people as well as kings and princes were among her visitors.¹⁰⁴ As he lay dying St Cuthbert commanded his brethren not to 'despise those of the household of the faith who come to you for hospitality', but rather to see that they were well-received and sent away 'with friendly kindness.'¹⁰⁵ In a letter given by Bishop Daniel of Winchester to Boniface the merits of hospitality were expounded. It was stated that, 'holy scripture lays special stress on the obligation of offering hospitality to travellers and shows how pleasing to God is the fulfilment of this duty.'¹⁰⁶ Saint Cuthbert acted as guestmaster at Ripon where he entertained an angel.¹⁰⁷ Religious houses were also important to the laity because they acted as centres for drafting and preserving written documents.¹⁰⁸ They were responsible for the production of charters and may be asked to create new documents as a result of fire, theft or loss.¹⁰⁹

Perhaps the most ubiquitous vehicle for pastoral activity was offered by the cult of saints. The power of a saint to attract people to visit a religious community in order to seek a cure for their ills or to petition the saint to intercede in heaven on

¹⁰⁴ HE IV.23

¹⁰⁵ VCP 39.

¹⁰⁶ Tangl no.11, pp.15-16.

¹⁰⁷ VCP 7; VCA II.2.

¹⁰⁸ P. Chaplais, 'The Origin and Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diploma', in Prisca Munimenta, ed. F. Ranger (London, 1973), pp.28-42 at pp.36-40.

¹⁰⁹ S 367, 371 (Fire Damage); S 222 (Theft); S 255, 227, 277, 358 (Loss).

their behalf can be illustrated through the miracle stories associated with King Oswald of Northumbria. After the death of Saint Oswald his bones were taken to the monastery at Bardney in the kingdom of Lindsey. The inmates at first refused to receive the relics on account of the fact that Oswald had once conquered the kingdom. However, a miraculous column of light which stretched to heaven from the carriage bearing Oswald's bones convinced the brothers to accept and wash the bones, placing them in a shrine. A visiting abbess, Aethelhild was told that many sick people had been healed by the soil of the floor on which the water used to wash the bones had been poured out. Another visitor possessed by a demoniac spirit was cured by this soil when the a priest's attempted exorcism failed.¹¹⁰ Monasteries could offer the laity certain advantageous functions. They could function as a means of disposing of unmarried daughters or of the sick, promote a royal cult or provide a place for burial.¹¹¹ They could also serve as a means of punishing criminals since Theodore's Penitential decreed that any layman who carried off a monk from a

¹¹⁰ HE III.11.

¹¹¹ Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p.121. When Wilfrid entered the monastic life at Lindisfarne he acted as servant to Cudda, a nobleman who had dedicated himself to the monastic life on account of the fact that he suffered from paralysis, VW 2. Aethelric, the son of Aethelmund an ealdorman of the Hwicce, made known at a synod at Aclea the names of lands he intended to give to Deerhurst if buried there, S 1187 and in the will of the Kentish reeve Abba a grant was given to his burial place, Folkestone, S 1482. On the importance of monastic houses in promoting royal cults see D.W. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), ch.5; Id., The Search for St. Wigstan, Prince-Martyr of the Kingdom of Mercia (Leicester, 1981); Id., 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', Anglo-Saxon England 11 (1983), pp.1-22; S. Ridyard, The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults (Cambridge, 1988); A.T. Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia', Midland History 10 (1985), pp.1-25.

monastery by stealth should either enter a monastery or subject himself to servitude.¹¹²

Those who advocate that monastic communities were actively engaged in parochial ministry have primarily focussed upon the nature of monastic communities as institutions rather than upon the personnel who inhabited them. If one examines the literary evidence for the role of *monasteria* in parochial ministry, it becomes apparent that the personnel from them who undertook pastoral care within the locality were predominantly ordained clergy. At Lindisfarne, the site of an episcopal see, all the inmates including the bishop, priests and members of the lesser grades were monks under obedience to the abbot.¹¹³ The prior was to minister to the locality and ensure that priests were sent out to perform duties such as the care of the sick and dying or the exorcism of the possessed. In his account of Aidan's activities as bishop of Lindisfarne, Bede mentions teaching by unordained monks but states that only those in priest's orders baptised.¹¹⁴ Wilfrid was given a fourth part of the Isle of Wight by King Caedwalla and he made this over to one of his clergy, Beornwine, but specifically assigned him a priest for the work of preaching and baptising.¹¹⁵ Saint Cuthbert carried out preaching and baptising in the surrounding countryside whilst a prior at Melrose and was often away for a month.¹¹⁶ However, Melrose

¹¹² Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.iii.1, p.179.

¹¹³ VCP 16.

¹¹⁴ HE III.3.

¹¹⁵ HE IV.16.

¹¹⁶ VCP 7; HE IV.27.

was associated with the episcopate as it was the daughter-house of Lindisfarne.¹¹⁷ Bishop Cedd established churches in various places in Essex especially Bradwell-on-Sea and Tilbury ordaining priests and deacons 'to assist him in preaching the word of faith and in the administration of the baptism.'¹¹⁸ Egbert's Dialogues similarly show the role of priests and ordained clergy in the ministry to the laity. Although Egbert's legislation covered monks, only priests and deacons are mentioned in relation to the ministry to the dying.¹¹⁹ Theodore's Penitential decreed that anyone wishing to set a *monasterium* in another place should do it on the advice of a bishop and should release a priest for the ministry of the church in the former place.¹²⁰ Headda, the abbot of a community at Dowdeswell promised that his 'inheritance' should pass to the see of Worcester when no member of his family in holy orders could be found to maintain the monastic rule.¹²¹ His insistence on his successors being in orders may have derived from the belief that his community had a duty to administer the sacraments to the surrounding population.

The allegedly late seventh-century charter of Breedon-on-the-Hill is a piece of evidence commonly used to suggest that *monasteria* were committed to providing

¹¹⁷ Cubitt, 'pastoral care and the conciliar canons', p.206; Id., 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England c.600-c.800', Northern History 25 (1989), pp.18-38 at pp.24-5.

¹¹⁸ HE III.22.

¹¹⁹ Egbert, Dialogues HS III, c.2, p.404.

¹²⁰ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.vi.7, p.195.

¹²¹ S 1413; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p.156.

pastoral care.¹²² In the document, which only survives in a late twelfth-century register from Peterborough Abbey, a Mercian *princeps*, Frithuric, made a grant 'so that a *monasterium* and oratory of monks serving God should be founded...and also a priest of honest life and good reputation instituted, who should bring the grace of baptism and the teaching of the Gospel doctrine to the people committed to his care.' However, it is difficult to say from this that it was the intention of the community as a whole to undertake pastoral care and the presence of the priest indicates the primary importance of ordained clergy in providing pastoral functions. It is further possible that the ministry of this priest could have been limited to the lay population working on the estate.¹²³

Although Bede defined pastoral responsibility widely, he seems to have viewed the formal obligations of the church towards the laity in a similar manner to that of the episcopate. Bede's Letter to Egbert shows that he perceived that the responsibility for pastoral care ultimately lay with the bishop. He advised Egbert how to organise the care of the laity within his diocese and advocated that new episcopal sees should be sited in *monasteria*. It has been observed that 'the very fact that Bede recommended that existing minsters should be chosen as the sites of his new bishoprics, and a bishop appointed from among the members of such a monastic community, suggests that the exercise of the pastoral cure was not alien to these

¹²² BCS 841, S 1803. The text is part of a later composite charter BCS 843, 842, S 1804, 1805; F.M. Stenton, 'Medehamstede and its colonies', in Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England, ed. D.M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp.179-92 at pp.182-4; A. Dornier, 'The Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire', in Mercian Studies, ed. A. Dornier (Leicester, 1977), pp.155-68.

¹²³ R. Morris, Churches in the Landscape (London, 1989), p.132.

institutions.¹²⁴ In one sense this is indeed the case since *monasteria* contained personnel who were engaged in parochial ministry. However, the fact that pastoral care was undertaken by the ordained clergy accounts for Bede's desire to reform the administrative structure of the church to ensure that parochial workers were more tightly controlled by bishops and that those who undertook pastoral work in *monasteria* came under episcopal authority.

There were isolated cases of individuals who exercised informal pastoral ministries. St Willibrord's father, Wilgils, retired to an oratory on the Humber estuary and crowds came flocking to him for instruction.¹²⁵ Significantly, however, Wilgils did not reside in a church regarded as a *monasterium* and his pursuit of a life of absolute solitude was an unusual case. The bishops insistence on controlling parochial ministry began to have strong effect in the early eighth century. Bishop Headda insisted on ordaining St Guthlac and it was significantly only after his ordination that Guthlac began to minister to the exiled King Aethelbald.¹²⁶ This may illustrate an attempt by the episcopal hierarchy to stop those who exercised an influence over the laity solely as a result of their own personal sanctity. In establishing a synodal and legislative tradition, the episcopate found a way of expressing its power and a desire to create a separate identity for itself. The monastic authors of hagiography had sought to create an image whereby asceticism was harnessed to the life of the bishop and enhanced the pastoral life of the church. For

¹²⁴ Foot, 'Parochial ministry', p.48.

¹²⁵ Alcuin, *Vita Sancti Willibrordi*, MGH SRM 7, pp.81-141, c.1, p.116.

¹²⁶ Felix, *Vita S. Guthlaci* 47, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956).

them the ideal bishop was and remained a monk. This conception of episcopal authority was central to Bede's thought on the nature of episcopal office. In prescriptive texts, however, the episcopate were not concerned with defining the nature of episcopal sanctity and applying monastic ideals to their office. They sought not to appropriate the monastic ideal but to control it.

Bishops, Monastic Property and the Monastic Ideal

Prescriptive literature sought to present the episcopate as the principal force generating and upholding Christian ideals in Anglo-Saxon England. Its power was to be proclaimed throughout all aspects of Christian life and it therefore sought to bring the nature and character of monasticism under its control. Monasteries were not rigidly defined in early Anglo-Saxon England.¹²⁷ The term *monasterium*, like its Old English equivalent *mynster*, covered a wide range of communal religious institutions that supported themselves from the surplus produce of their estates, were freed from the burdens of secular obligations other than the building of bridges and fortresses and the provision of military service, and lived by a common rule. No distinctions were made in the terminology used to denote male, female or double houses. It is anachronistic to apply the ideals of the tenth-century reformation to early Anglo-Saxon England and assume that all monasteries lived a communal life under

¹²⁷ On this topic see Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp.115-7; S. Foot, 'What was an early Anglo-Saxon Monastery?', in *Monastic Studies*, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, 1990), pp.48-57; Id., 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters'; Id., 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a review of terminology', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, pp.212-25; M. Deanesly, 'Early English and Gallic Minsters', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4th series 23 (1941), pp.25-53; J. Godfrey, *The English Parish 600-1300* (London, 1969), p.17.

Benedictine vows and thus can be easily distinguished from groups of secular clergy also living a communal life. The Benedictine Rule was merely one rule among many.¹²⁸ Asser, even when contrasting regular and irregular communities, used the term *monasterium* for both.¹²⁹ The Kentish 'monasteries' were composed of priests, deacons and clergy in lesser orders, maintained a communal life, came under the rule of priest-abbots in the ninth century and appear to be comparable to the rural baptismal churches of Francia and Lombard Italy fulfilling the pastoral needs of the surrounding inhabitants.¹³⁰

The Council of Clofesho of 747 sought to provide a definition of the nature and character of *monasteria* to serve as a yardstick by which a bishop, expected to carry out an examination of such institutions, would be able to discern whether the monastic life was truly being followed. It perceived *monasteria* in a contemplative perspective. They were to be 'honest habitations of the silent and quiet, and of such as labour for God's sake; not receptacles of recreative arts, of poets, harpists, musicians and buffoons but habitations of those who pray and read, and praise God.'¹³¹ The canons of the council emphasised the liturgical and intellectual aspects of the monastic ideal, the private reading of scripture and the observance of the seven

¹²⁸ P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp.141-69.

¹²⁹ Asser, *Vita Alfredi Regis*, ch.93, ed. W.H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), p.81.

¹³⁰ Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, pp.187-91; C. Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes in Medieval Italy* (New York, 1952); Deanesly, 'Early English and Gallic Minsters'; G.W.O Addleshaw, 'The beginnings of the parochial system', St Anthony's Hall Publications no. 3, (2nd edn. York, 1959); D.W. Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend* (Leicester, 1982), pp.44-9.

¹³¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 20, p.369.

canonical hours of prayer¹³², and, as noted above, did not primarily envisage a pastoral role for monasteries. The lifestyles of the inhabitants were to be reformed. Drunkenness was condemned, entertainments were to be 'cleanly and sober'¹³³ and dress was to be simple.¹³⁴ Nuns were 'not to go in secular apparel, or in gaudy, gay clothes, such as lay girls use, but..always to keep the garb of chastity, which they have received to signify their humility and contempt of the world, lest the hearts of others be defiled by the sight of them.'¹³⁵ Candidates for the monastic life were to be diligently examined and were not to receive the tonsure until their moral qualifications had been clearly tried.¹³⁶

In hagiographical texts, the ascetic ideals of monasticism were applied to the episcopate. The ideal bishop was and remained a monk. Episcopal texts, however, sought to distinguish the lives of monks and bishops rather than to combine them. In the Council of Hertford separate canons forbidding wandering, covered *monachi* responsible to their abbots and *clerici* responsible to their bishops¹³⁷. Canon six of the Council of Clofesho drew a distinction between *clericis* and *monachis* when decreeing that the lifestyles of both should be examined before their ordination to the

¹³² Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 7, p.365, canon 15, p.367, canon 20, p.369.

¹³³ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 21, p.369.

¹³⁴ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 19, pp.368-9; canon 28, p.374. Aldhelm was also conscious of the luxury evident within ecclesiastical dress commenting upon those who preferred fine linen shirts, scarlet or blue tunics and bright head-dresses to simpler garb, *De Virginitate*, ch.58, ed. Ehwald, pp.317-9.

¹³⁵ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 28, p.374.

¹³⁶ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 24, p.370.

¹³⁷ Council of Hertford *HE* IV.5 ch.4, ch.5.

priesthood.¹³⁸ It was also decreed that neither *clerici*, *monachi* nor *sanctimoniales* were to live in the dwellings of the laity.¹³⁹ The Legatine Synods distinguished between canons living canonically and monks living regularly. It decreed that *canonici* live canonically ‘both as to diet and apparel and as to their private property, so that there may be a distinction between canon, monk and secular.’¹⁴⁰ Aldhelm in *De Virginitate* drew a distinction between ‘those living cloistered under the discipline of the monastery’ and ‘ecclesiastics whose clerical sphere of duty is under the control of a bishop’ which suggests he may have been elevated to the episcopate when he wrote the work.¹⁴¹ Egbert’s *Dialogues* did not assign an exalted place to the figure of the monk as hagiography had done. The value of a monk’s oath in criminal cases was rated at thirty ploughlands whilst that of a priest was one hundred and twenty. Similarly if a layman killed a priest he was to pay eight hundred silver pieces to the church to which the priest belonged. A monk, however, carried a blood price of four hundred silver pieces.¹⁴² In the second book of Theodore’s *Penitential*, rulings concerning those in orders and abbots, monks and *monasteria* were given in separate sections.¹⁴³ The *Penitential* graded clergy in a similar manner to Egbert’s *Dialogues*. A priest or deacon who vomited through drunkenness was to do penance

¹³⁸ Council of Clonisho 747 HS III canon 6, p.364.

¹³⁹ Council of Clonisho 747 HS III canon 29, pp.374-5.

¹⁴⁰ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 4, p.22.

¹⁴¹ Aldhelm, *De Virginitate*, ch.58, ed. Ehwald, p.317.

¹⁴² Egbert, *Dialogues* HS III, cc.1, 12, pp.404, 408-9.

¹⁴³ Theodore, *Penitential* HS III, II.ii, II.vi, pp.191-2, 195-6.

for forty days whereas a monk was to do penance for thirty.¹⁴⁴ The killing of a bishop or *presbyter* was considered to be more serious than slaying a *monachus aut clericus*.¹⁴⁵

Episcopal concern to control the nature of monasticism was particularly predominant with regard to the issue of monastic property. At the Council of Hertford it was decreed that 'no bishop shall interfere in any way with monasteries dedicated to God, nor take anything from them forcibly.'¹⁴⁶ Theodore's Penitential declared that after an abbot's death the brethren ought to select their own abbot.¹⁴⁷ By 816 at the Council of Chelsea, however, the episcopate sought the exclusive right to appoint abbots and abbesses.¹⁴⁸ This huge change requires explanation.

Canon seven of the Council of Chelsea of 816 was concerned to prevent the constant drain of estates from ecclesiastical control by decreeing that bishops, abbots and abbesses who received land should not alienate the property unless dire necessity such as the threat of famine or devastation by an army so required it, nor should they lease the property for more than a single lifetime.¹⁴⁹ Canon eight launched an attack

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., I.i.2-3, p.177.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., I.iv.5, p.180.

¹⁴⁶ Council of Hertford HE IV.5, ch.3. Cf. Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.vi.1-4, p.195.

¹⁴⁷ Theodore, Penitential, HS III, II.vi.3-6, p.195.

¹⁴⁸ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 4, pp.580-1.

¹⁴⁹ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 7, p.582. By the late eighth century it appears to have been common for monasteries to lease part of their estates to lay people for up to three lifetimes in return for an annual render of produce or monetary rent instead of farming them directly. Wilfrith bishop of the Hwicce leased land at Bibury in Gloucestershire to Leppa, comes, and his daughter Beage, for two lives with reversion thereafter to the see of Worcester, S 1254; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, p.152.

on the lay lordship of monasteries by appealing to the authority of the Council of Chalcedon. It authorised the bishop to intervene if on account of 'the rapacity of secular men' the monastery was unable to stand inviolable when facing 'the ravening jaws of wolves.'¹⁵⁰ These measures ran counter to the tendency prevalent in late seventh and early eighth-century England when monasteries had often obtained papal privileges exempting them from episcopal authority and guarding their rights to elect abbots and abbesses from their own community.¹⁵¹ Wearmouth and Jarrow possessed a privilege allowing free abbatial elections. St Augustine's, Canterbury obtained a privilege allowing free elections and allowing mass to be celebrated there only at the invitation of the abbot. Pope Constantine I granted a privilege for the abbeys of Bermondsey and Woking which allowed the community to choose abbots and ordinands. These were to be consecrated by the local bishop who was forbidden to interfere in matters pertaining to monastic property.¹⁵² The change evident at Chelsea was anticipated by the Council of Clofesho of 803 where Archbishop Aethelheard declared that monasteries 'shall never from this time henceforth presume...to elect for themselves laymen and seculars as lords over the inheritance of the Lord.'¹⁵³ The growth of this interventionist attitude has been explained in

¹⁵⁰ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 8, p.582.

¹⁵¹ Levison, England and the Continent, pp.22-33; Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', pp.146-50.

¹⁵² Wearmouth and Jarrow, HE IV.18; HA 6, 11, 15; Vita Ceolfredi 16, 20. St. Augustine's, Canterbury, BCS 38, discussed by Levison, England and the Continent, pp.25-6, pp.187-90. Bermondsey and Woking BCS 133, noted by Levison, England and the Continent, p.26 n.2.

¹⁵³ BCS 312.

terms of the need to defend monasteries from the secular abuses arising from the foundation of 'family monasteries' highlighted within Bede's Letter to Egbert and Boniface's letter to Archbishop Cuthbert. The influence of these texts upon the drafting of synodal legislation thus needs to be examined.

Bede's Letter to Egbert showed a monk who had come to the view that episcopal intervention in monastic elections and in the disposal of property was justifiable and indeed necessary on account of certain conditions prevalent within Northumbria. In it he attacked pseudo-monasteries founded on land granted in perpetuity to laymen who then set themselves up as monks to avoid taxation and military service. This practice meant that supplies of fighting men were diminished and religious standards were affected. Boniface wrote from the continent to Archbishop Cuthbert describing a similar situation and recommending excommunication as punishment.

As to the point that any layman, be he emperor or king, official or courtier, relying upon secular force, may wrest a monastery from the power of a bishop, abbot or an abbess and begin to rule there in place of the abbot, have monks under him and hold property bought by the blood of Christ, the ancient Fathers called such a man a robber, sacrilegious, a murderer of the poor, a satanic wolf entering the sheepfold of Christ, to be condemned with the extreme anathema before the judgement seat of God.¹⁵⁴

There are problems in relating the pronouncements on episcopal intervention

¹⁵⁴ Tangl no.78, pp.161-70, at pp.169-70. Trans. C.H. Talbot, The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany (London, 1954), p.133. 'Illud autem quod laicus homo vel imperator vel rex aut aliquis perfectorum vel comitum seculari potestate fultus sibi per violentum rapiat monasterium de potestate episcopi vel abbatis vel abbatissae et incipiat ipse vice abbatis regere et habere sub se monachos et pecuniam possidere, que fuit Christi sanguine comparata, talem hominem antiqui patres nominabant raptorem et sacrilegum et homicidium pauperum et lupum diaboli intransentem in ovile Christi et maximo anathematis vinculo dampnandum ante tribunal Christi.'

in the conciliar texts of the early ninth century to the influence of these texts. The first concerns the fact that although the Council of Clofesho of 747 was closely connected with Boniface's letter to Cuthbert, and advocated the need for bishops to investigate the quality of monastic life, it regarded lay lordship with a degree of tolerance acknowledging that monasteries 'if it is right so to call them' were subject to 'the violence of tyrannical covetousness' but ordering that they receive the ministry of a priest not the abrogation of their charters.¹⁵⁵ The second concerns the fact that the next council for which a detailed set of canons is available, the Legatine Synods of 786, ignored the problem of lay lordship altogether. It sought to declare that papal privileges to churches were to be respected, and that abbots and abbesses were to be elected from among the community with the counsel of the local bishop.¹⁵⁶ Thus two councils held chronologically close to the two letters did not take up their advice.

Patrick Sims-Williams has suggested that Bede's Letter to Egbert should not be read at face value but as a piece of monastic polemic drawing upon a tradition evident within texts such as Cassian's Conferences whereby large monasteries attacked the more informal monasticism out of which they themselves had grown.¹⁵⁷ The episcopate may have recognised that historically the ideal of the 'family monastery' could be traced back to the beginnings of Western monasticism and hence

¹⁵⁵ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 5, p.364.

¹⁵⁶ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 8, p.22; canon 5, p.22. Cf. Egbert, Dialogues HS III, c.11, p.408.

¹⁵⁷ Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, pp.126-128.

not wished to have disapproved of such institutions outright. Jerome's friend Marcella turned her villa into a convent¹⁵⁸, Gregory the Great had three consecrated aunts who continued to live in their home¹⁵⁹, and in England itself pious laymen would build churches on their estates for bishops to consecrate.¹⁶⁰ At a synod held in 736 or 737, the estate of a 'family monastery' was discussed in a dispute brought before Archbishop Nothhelm.¹⁶¹ Dunne, the abbess of Withington, had granted the monastery to her grand-daughter, Hrothwaru, but due to her youth, had temporarily entrusted it to the girl's mother who subsequently refused to hand the charter back to Hrothwaru, claiming that it had been stolen. The decision of the synod was that Hrothwaru's 'possession of the monastery was to be most secure' although after her death the land was to be given back to the episcopal see of Worcester. This case reveals both the fact that bishops in council had an influence on the development of monasticism and that they did not necessarily disapprove of the nature of 'family monasteries' but recognised them as 'an intrinsic part of the English ecclesiastical landscape.'¹⁶² The cell described in Aethelwulf's poem De Abbatibus was governed

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.129; G. Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries (Rome, 1957); J.N.D. Kelly, Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies (London, 1975), pp.91-103.

¹⁵⁹ Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries; J.M. Petersen, The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background (Toronto, 1984), pp.67-8.

¹⁶⁰ HE V.4-5.

¹⁶¹ S 1429; BCS 156; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, pp.131-134; H.P.R. Finberg, Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England (London, 1964), pp.21-65.

¹⁶² Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p.139. On the importance to women of the inheritable nature of monastic property see D.B. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: a study of the status and position of women in an early medieval society' (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge 1985), pp.243-70. The office of abbess often appears to have

by a series of abbots related to its founder Eanmund which implies that not all 'family monasteries' were deemed to be corrupt. Episcopal intervention may thus have been less of a defensive manoeuvre and more of an expression of episcopal power.

During the eighth century, bishops were becoming wealthier and more powerful particularly through the unity they had acquired in council.¹⁶³ They were thus in a position to increase the wealth of their sees through the acquisition of monastic property. The activities of the bishops of Worcester in the later eighth century contrast significantly with the power displayed by independent proprietary *monasteria* such as Whitby in the seventh. In the see of Worcester bishops attempted to bring independent communities under their control and to bring them under priests appointed from the episcopal *familia*.¹⁶⁴ In the seventh century the double monastery of Whitby had trained priests and its abbess Aelfflaed had played a decisive role in episcopal appointments at York.¹⁶⁵ Pupils from Whitby; Bosa, John of Beverley and Wilfrid II supplanted Wilfrid at York and for a time at Hexham. During Aelfflaed's abbacy, a bishop, Trumwine resided at Whitby.¹⁶⁶ He was unable to curb the

been accepted as hereditary, HE V.3 describes how Abbess Hereburh at Watton planned to make her daughter Cwenburh abbess in her place. Seaxburh succeeded her sister Aethelburh at Ely, HE IV.19 and at Whitby Aelfflaed and Eanflaed ruled together, HE IV.26.

¹⁶³ For an account of a poor see in the seventh century see HE IV.12 which describes how Bishop Cwichelm left the see of Rochester soon after his appointment due to lack of means.

¹⁶⁴ C. Dyer, Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester 650-1540 (Cambridge, 1980), ch.1; Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, chs. 5, 6; Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.179-80.

¹⁶⁵ Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', pp.143-5, 149-50.

¹⁶⁶ HE IV.26.

independence of the abbess. She looked neither to Trumwine nor to her diocesan at York but to Cuthbert for the dedication of her church at Osingadun.¹⁶⁷ Although Theodore disapproved of double monasteries he did not propose to suppress them.¹⁶⁸ Despite a move towards segregated enclosure in the eighth century, double monasteries survived although they would appear to have exerted less influence over the life of the church than such institutions as Whitby.¹⁶⁹

The process whereby the see of Worcester managed to secure control of *monasteria* usually involved the need for compromise due to the endangering of the proprietary interests of heirs. Thus at the synod of Brentford in 781, Offa was allowed to receive Bath, but willingly conceded Stratford, Stour, Bredon, Hampton and Stour in Ismere to the see.¹⁷⁰ Bishops were not seeking to attack lay lordship outright in securing control of estates but were conscious that monastic property controlled by laymen could enhance political strength. They therefore sought to check secular powers who controlled powerful independent monasteries and attempted to

¹⁶⁷ VCA IV.10; VCP 34.

¹⁶⁸ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.vi.8, p.195.

¹⁶⁹ Hollis, Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church, esp. pp.75-81, 242-82; J.T. Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca.500-1100)', in Medieval Religious Women, ed. J.A. Nichols and L.T. Shank (Kalamazoo, 1984), Vol. 1, Distant Echoes, pp.51-86. Winchcombe and Wenlock were still double houses in 897 and 901 respectively, S 1442, S 221.

¹⁷⁰ S 1257. After having defeated Cynewulf at Bensington in 779 Offa may have wished to acquire Bath due to its strategic position on the West Saxon border. This involved the need for tactical bargaining, hence his willingness to concede property to the see. For example, Offa had granted properties to Bredon monastery on condition that they remained within his kindred's control for ever, S 109. The counter claim of the episcopate succeeded and the estates of the monastery formed the nucleus of an episcopal estate in the 840s, S 117, 1272. The synod is fully discussed in Sims-Williams, Religion and Literature, pp.159-165.

exclude the ecclesiastical hierarchy from them.¹⁷¹ Bishops became concerned about lay lordship when it became a real source of rival religious authority. This concern is illustrated through their involvement in property disputes with the Mercian kings.

The Mercian kings recognised the power which could be obtained by bringing monasticism under their control.¹⁷² They attempted to use monastic property to consolidate royal power in newly subordinated kingdoms. The most notorious case involving Mercian seizure of church property concerned the gift of four *aratra* of Bishopsbourne in Kent by King Ecgberht of Kent's minister, Ealdhun to Christ Church, Canterbury which Offa annulled because he did not consider that without his consent it had been lawfully granted. At a synod held at the Mercian royal vill of Tamworth in 799, Archbishop Aethelheard regained possession of this property from King Cenwulf with forty more *aratra* which King Ecgberht had given Christ Church but at the price of one hundred mancuses.¹⁷³ Another disputed case concerned land in Denton in Surrey which Offa claimed from the episcopal see of Selsey for his monastery at Beddingham. Cenwulf defied a synodal judgement of 801 which restored this land to Bishop Wehtun and it was not until 825 that a council held at Clifesho reaffirmed the judgement of the earlier council and restored Denton to

¹⁷¹ Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', p.304.

¹⁷² Their activities may be compared with those of Pippin III in Francia whose attempts to bring monasteries under royal control involved removing Fulda from the *dominium* of Bishop Lull of Mainz and providing it with royal *defensio*. Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils', pp.400-1.

¹⁷³ S 155, 1259, 1264.

Selsey.¹⁷⁴ Both Offa and Cenwulf obtained privileges by which they ensured that monasteries which they founded remained under their control. Pope Hadrian I placed the monasteries founded or 'justly acquired' by Offa and consecrated in the name of Saint Peter under the control of the king, Queen Cynethryth, and their descendants for ever.¹⁷⁵ Cenwulf received privileges for Glastonbury and Winchcombe from Popes Leo III and Paschal.¹⁷⁶

Offa's realisation of the increasing political power of the episcopate had led him to attempt to establish his own metropolitan see at Lichfield since he recognised the importance of acquiring a friendly archbishop to secure the consecration of his son. The bishops emerged from this episode conscious of the need to proclaim their unity and corporate authority in the face of secular power as they were to do at the Council of Chelsea in 816. Control over monastic property became a means by which they could preserve their own identity as spiritual overlords. The conflict between Wulfred and Cenwulf over Kentish monastic communities which resulted in Wulfred's six year suspension from the see of Canterbury was due to this issue.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ S 158, 1435.

¹⁷⁵ Liber diurnus Romanorum pontificum, ed. H. Foerster (Bern, 1958), no.93; Levison, England and the Continent, pp.29-31.

¹⁷⁶ S 152; BCS 337, 363. The authenticity of these privileges is defended by W. Levison, England and the Continent, pp.251, 255-7. Winchcombe, Cenwulf's chief royal monastery in the diocese of Worcester, remained a powerful independent monastery and was involved in litigious relations with the see, S 1442. An eleventh-century legend stated that Cenwulf's murdered son, St Kenelm, was buried there, Thacker, 'Kings, Saints and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia', pp.8-12; Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', pp.9-10.

¹⁷⁷ This is fully discussed in Brooks, Church of Canterbury, ch.9.

This conflict was only resolved at the Council of Kingston in 838 and confirmed the year after at aet Astran.¹⁷⁸ The bishops were granted spiritual lordship over the Kentish communities whilst the West Saxon kings claimed lordship and protection. By this compromise, perhaps necessitated by the impact of Viking raids, Archbishop Ceolnoth conceded much that Wulfred and Aethelheard had fought for. Yet as has been shown the issue of lay lordship may not have been entirely opposed by the episcopate and hence to declare Ceolnoth's compromise as a failure is perhaps too harsh a judgement.¹⁷⁹ The bishops in council, in proclaiming their separate identity and power to the laity, were also conscious of their obligations to the laity. These must thus be examined.

Bishops and the Laity

Episcopal concern to provide and control parochial ministry covered not only the ecclesiastical personnel who were responsible for the provision of pastoral care but also the laity who were to receive such care. Bishops were occupied with the task of integrating the concerns of their faith with the concerns of society. They presented themselves as the guardians and teachers of a newly transformed society. They also continued to seek its further transformation.

In undergoing conversion to Christianity, Anglo-Saxon England had not

¹⁷⁸ S 1438, S 281. For discussion see Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.197-206.

¹⁷⁹ Brooks, Church of Canterbury, pp.203-06.

completely exchanged one set of religious values for another.¹⁸⁰ Traditional religious practices defined as much by local custom as by outside authority survived. A form of Christianity existed which permitted the continuation of many traditional religious observances. Episcopal texts were concerned with the persistence amongst the laity of practices perceived to be pagan where Christianity existed as an additional rather than an exclusive set of beliefs.¹⁸¹ Bishops sought to end such practices by means of two processes of religious change, christianisation and depaganisation.¹⁸² Depaganisation involved forcing the population to abandon traditional religious practices they performed either in conjunction with or instead of Christianity. Theodore's Penitential prescribed penances for those who sacrificed to demons, performed diabolical incantations or attempted unorthodox forms of healing.¹⁸³ The Council of Clofesho urged that bishops should annually inspect their dioceses and forbid 'pagan observances, diviners, sorcerers, auguries, omens, amulets and

¹⁸⁰ P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in Bede and Anglo-Saxon England, ed. R.T. Farrell (British Archaeological Reports 46, Oxford, 1978), p.66.

¹⁸¹ A.L. Meaney, 'Anglo-Saxon Idolators and Ecclesiasts from Theodore to Alcuin; A Source Study', in Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History, 5, ed. W. Filmer-Sankey, S.C. Hawkes, J. Campbell, D. Brown (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Oxford, 1992), pp.103-126; Id., 'Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism', Parergon, New Series 3 (1985), pp.1-25.

¹⁸² H.-D. Kahl, 'Die ersten Jahrhunderte des missionengeschichtlichen Mittelalters Bausteine für eine Phänomenologie bis ca.1050', in Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte, ed. H. Frohnes et al. 2 parts. Part 1, Die Kirche des früheren Mittelalters, ed. K. Schäferdiek (Munich, 1978), pp.11-76, esp. pp.36-38, 40-44. These processes covered far more than the replacement of the German pantheon with the Christian God as is explained in I.N. Wood, 'Pagans and holy men 600-800', in Irland und die Christenheit, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1987), pp.347-61.

¹⁸³ Theodore, Penitential HS III I.xv.1, 2, 4, 5, pp.189-90.

charms.¹⁸⁴ Canon nineteen of the Legatine report called upon Christians to repudiate the relics of pagan rites: tattooing, the mutilation of horses' nostrils, ears and tails and the eating of horse flesh.¹⁸⁵ Egbert's *Dialogues* declared that idol worshippers, enchanters, conjurors and those who delivered themselves as captives to the devil through soothsayers should be deposed if they were ordained and prohibited from ordination if unordained.¹⁸⁶ The extirpation of paganism was to be carried out not only by prohibitive and coercive measures but also by instructive ones through the process of Christianisation. By this process bishops were to oversee the means by which the laity were urged to accept Christian teachings.

Through the process of Christianisation bishops sought to ensure that the laity abided by the habits, attitudes and values of an ideal Christian life. The laity were to be persuaded that the Christian faith was an effective and exclusive alternative to traditional forms of religion defined as pagan and idolatrous. In order for Anglo-Saxon society to be truly reformed it was necessary that the whole of the *populus Dei* be properly instructed in faith, doctrine and morals. The creed was to be taught and the catechetical teaching of baptismal candidates was stressed.¹⁸⁷ Godparents were to take responsibility for teaching their charges as they were growing up by

¹⁸⁴ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 3, pp.363-4.

¹⁸⁵ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 19, pp.26-7. Theodore's *Penitential* did not prohibit the eating of horse flesh although it considered it wasn't the custom for it to be eaten, HS III, II.xi.4, p.198.

¹⁸⁶ Egbert, *Dialogues* HS III c.15, p.410.

¹⁸⁷ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canons 10, 11, p.366.

instructing them in the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.¹⁸⁸ It was also decreed that on the Lord's Day and other liturgical feast days, 'the priests of God do often invite the people to meet in the Church, to hear the word of God, and to be often present at the sacraments of the masses and at preaching of sermons.'¹⁸⁹ In consecrating churches, bishops were to ensure that the saints to whom the church was dedicated were to be painted on the walls perhaps partly to serve as educational visual aids. The consecration was to take place with the sprinkling of holy water and a ritual which was in accordance with the service of the service book. The eucharist consecrated by the bishop was to be placed in the *capsula*, the reliquary or *sepulchrum*, with the relics of the church. If no relics could be obtained, the eucharist itself was sufficient to serve in their place.¹⁹⁰ Lay boys were to be admonished to take communion frequently while they were not as yet corrupted and the urgency of conversion, confession and penance was to be emphasised in the face of the imminence of death.¹⁹¹ Psalms were to be regularly sung 'with the inward intention of the heart and a suitable humiliation of the body' so that they might be a profitable spiritual cure.¹⁹²

Prescriptive texts showed considerable interest in the manner in which baptism

¹⁸⁸ Legatine Synod 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 2, p.21. On the duties of Godparents see J. Lynch, Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe (Princeton, 1986), pp.318-28.

¹⁸⁹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 14, p.367.

¹⁹⁰ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 2, p.580.

¹⁹¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 23, p.370; Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 20, p.27.

¹⁹² Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 27, pp.372-74.

was to be performed. They appear to have regarded infant baptism as the norm. Theodore imposed penalties for the non performance of infant baptism. If a weak infant recommended to a priest for baptism died unbaptised, the priest was to be deposed. If parents were responsible for failing to have baptised a child who died in infancy, they were to do penance for one year. If the child were as old as three they were to do penance for three years.¹⁹³ The instructions given to godparents in the Legatine Synods also suggest infant baptism was the norm. However, it is clear that adults continued to lack baptism. Theodore ordered that a priest who refused to travel to a sick person to administer the sacrament should be deposed.¹⁹⁴ The Council of Chelsea stipulated that priests who failed to perform baptism through negligence were to cease from their ministry until corrected by their bishop.¹⁹⁵

Baptismal candidates were to renounce 'diabolical pomps, auguries and divinations' and priests were ordered not to pour water on the heads of infants but to immerse them in the font after the example of Christ's own baptism.¹⁹⁶ Godparents were to be both baptised and confirmed and Theodore thought it usual for separate persons to act as godparents at baptism and confirmation.¹⁹⁷ In writing to Egbert, Bede had stressed the fact that many areas lacked a bishop to perform confirmation and it is arguable that the stress which was laid upon the importance of

¹⁹³ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.xiv.28-9, p.189.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., I.ix.7, p.185.

¹⁹⁵ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 11, p.584.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.; Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 11, p.366.

¹⁹⁷ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.iv.8-9, p.193.

annual visitations by bishops to all parts of their diocese was intended to increase the opportunities for the baptised laity to receive confirmation.¹⁹⁸ The problem of rebaptism was dealt with by Egbert and Theodore. Egbert stated that baptism ought not to be performed more than once even if it had been performed by one who was not canonically ordained.¹⁹⁹ Theodore imposed penances on those who had been baptised twice and barred them from ordination. Elsewhere, however, he ordered the rebaptism of those who had been baptised by unbaptised priests.²⁰⁰

Church and laity were to have mutual obligations to each other. Gifts for the church were to be solicited in the form of tithes and alms. Theodore's Penitential is the earliest extant text to mention the payment of tithe although it is clear that tithe was exacted from the laity prior to its composition. The tribute of the church was to be according to the custom of the province so that the poor would not suffer greatly. It was also decreed that it was not lawful to give tithes except to the poor and to pilgrims.²⁰¹ Priests were exempt from tithes.²⁰² The Legatine Synods decreed that all were to give a tenth of all they possessed in the form of tithes.²⁰³ Canon twenty-six of the Council of Clofesho discussed at length the purpose and proper use of

¹⁹⁸ Bede, Epistola ad Egbertum, ed. C. Plummer, I, pp.410-12; A. Angenendt, 'Bonifatius und das Sacramentum initiationis', Römische Quartalschrift 72 (1977), pp.150-8.

¹⁹⁹ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.5, pp.405-6.

²⁰⁰ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.ix.12, II.ii.13, pp.185, 192.

²⁰¹ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.xiv.10-11, p.203; G. Constable, Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, 1964), pp.30-1.

²⁰² Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.ii.8, p.191.

²⁰³ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 17, pp.25-6.

almsgiving. Alms could be extracted as a means of penance but were not a means of buying the right to indulge in sinful practices and were not to be given out of 'unjust plunder' but out of 'well-gotten substance.'²⁰⁴ The bishops imposed a ban on usury and sought just and equal weights and measures for all in canon seventeen of the Legatine Synods.²⁰⁵ Clergy were to seek to win the goodwill of the laity by interceding for them. They were to pray for the kings and rulers and they were to keep Rogation days where they would pray for the preservation of crops.²⁰⁶

The married life of the laity was also to come under the scrutiny of bishops.²⁰⁷ A strict attitude was adopted towards the reception of the eucharist by the sexually active.²⁰⁸ A husband who slept with his wife was to wash before entering church.²⁰⁹ At the Council of Hertford it was decreed that 'that nothing be allowed but lawful wedlock. Let none be guilty of incest, and let none leave his own wife except for fornication...If anyone puts away his own wife who is joined to him by lawful matrimony, he may not take another if he wishes to be a true Christian; he must either remain as he is or else be reconciled to his own wife.'²¹⁰ However,

²⁰⁴ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 26, pp.371-2.

²⁰⁵ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 17, pp.25-6.

²⁰⁶ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 30, pp.375-6, canon 15, p.367, canon 16, p.368.

²⁰⁷ Some useful general remarks may be found in M.A. Meyer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Penitentials and the Position of Women', *Haskins Society Journal* 2 (1990), pp.47-61.

²⁰⁸ Theodore, *Penitential* HS III, I.xii.3, xiv.1, II.xii.1-4, pp.186-7, 199; Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 23, p.370.

²⁰⁹ Theodore, *Penitential* HS III, II.xii.29, p.201.

²¹⁰ Council of Hertford *HE* IV.5. ch.10.

the second book of Theodore's Penitential regarded it as permissible to sever the marriage bond by entering a monastery.²¹¹ Although Theodore imposed penances on those who remarried²¹², he permitted remarriage in a number of circumstances. A woman could remarry after a year if her husband was enslaved through theft, fornication or any sin but only if the enslaved man was her first husband. A woman could also take another husband if her husband was found to be impotent. A man could divorce a pagan wife who refused to be converted. He could also remarry if he divorced his wife for adultery although he could only remarry if the wife he divorced was his first wife. A man could also remarry in event of desertion by his wife and forcible captivity from which she could not be redeemed. Regulations covering what happened if the original partner returned from captivity were contradictory. In one case men and women were to abandon their spouse if they had remarried and receive the former partner. In another case a man was to hold on to his remarried state and his returning former wife was permitted to remarry only if the dissolved marriage was her first.²¹³ The Legatine Synods forbade unlawful marriages. They sought to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate princes by disinheriting the sons of whores, adulterers and nuns.²¹⁴

In making statements about the need to combat paganism, to instruct and

²¹¹ Theodore, Penitential HS III, II.xii.6, 8, 12, pp.199-200.

²¹² Ibid., I.xiv.2-3, p.187-8.

²¹³ Ibid., II.xii.8, 32, 18-24, pp.199-201.

²¹⁴ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 12, pp.23-4, canons 15-16, p.25; P. Stafford, Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages (London, 1983), pp.62-71.

provide for the laity and to win their obedience, the bishops were proclaiming to their audience their own specialised function as the exponents of ritual and setters of norms. They aimed to show how the responsibility for social renewal had become central to their role. Through the enactment of legislation, the laity would learn about the bishops' role and position and through the written word the power of bishops could be articulated and transmitted.

It is, however, difficult to measure the effectiveness of the bishops legislative measures.²¹⁵ It is likely that legislative measures drawn up under episcopal authority represented the expression of an ideology more than an enforceable programme of law. As an ecclesiastical elite, bishops expected their rulings to be effective and presumed that laymen would attempt to imitate the behaviour of ecclesiastics by regularly engaging in communion and prayer. However, the process of Christianisation was reciprocal and could not be put into operation without the consent and agreement of the local populace. In practice therefore the rigorous hostility expressed by bishops towards traditional religious customs which they defined as pagan and their commendation of strict penitential practices may have had little direct impact upon the laity. Some of the laity continued to practise a different 'level' of Christianity from that advocated by bishops and priests. Alcuin's correspondence reveals the continual blending of traditional religious practices with Christianity by the laity who were reprimanded for using amulets and charms in the late eighth century.²¹⁶ Although Theodore sought to respond to specific cases, it is

²¹⁵ Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', p.160-5.

²¹⁶ Dümmler, nos.290, 291, pp.448-49.

clear from the Penitential that he realised that the imposition of penance would require coercion and was willing to use the secular arm to enforce ecclesiastical penalties.²¹⁷ Penance could be reduced if a murderer rendered the victim's blood price to his kin and a murderer of a bishop or priest was to be judged by the king.²¹⁸ However, in order for the church to utilise the secular arm to enforce its will local magnates needed to be sympathetic to its teachings and it is clear from the correspondence of Bede, Boniface and Alcuin that this was often not the case since kings and nobles were frequently reprimanded for violently opposing and neglecting clerical teaching.

Egbert's Dialogues claimed that during the twelve days before Christmas a substantial section of the laity would resort to their confessors.²¹⁹ However, as the text was a manual written for priests it may reflect more of an ideal than reality. Theodore's Penitential lacked an insular manuscript tradition and had a greater impact on the continent.²²⁰ Furthermore there is evidence that there were abuses in the penitential system and that the rich sought to obtain the commutation of penance. The Council of Clofesho legislated against the practice whereby the rich paid others to expiate their sins.²²¹ Bede had earlier highlighted this abuse and condemned bishops

²¹⁷ A.J. Frantzen, The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983), pp.78-9.

²¹⁸ Theodore, Penitential HS III, I.iv.1, 5, p.180.

²¹⁹ Egbert, Dialogues HS III c.16, pp.412-3.

²²⁰ Frantzen, Literature of Penance, pp.68-9, 82-3.

²²¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 26, pp.371-2.

who received presents from the laity but did not labour to eradicate their iniquities.²²² However, it is clear that the legislative action of bishops did have some impact on the laity. The attempts of the bishops of Worcester to eliminate lay lordship of *monasteria* met with some success and by 800 a large number of communities were under the direct control of the see.²²³

Bishops and the Continent

In order to understand the image of the episcopate created through the collective activity of bishops in council, one must consider the connections with the continent evident within the decrees of Anglo-Saxon synods. These reveal the manner in which through the convening of regular councils the bishops strengthened their contact with the Frankish kingdoms and with Rome.

The Council of Clofesho of 747 was closely connected with the reform of the Frankish Church inaugurated by Boniface, as is revealed through the letter of Boniface to Archbishop Cuthbert dated to the same year as the council and found together with the decrees of the council in the original manuscript.²²⁴ In this letter Boniface reported the activities of a Frankish synod to Cuthbert revealing that this synod legislated that bishops should make annual rounds of their diocese, should report synodal decrees to meetings of their own diocese and should forbid 'the servants of God to wear showy or martial dress.' These concerns are reflected in the

²²² Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, ed. D. Hurst CCSL 119A, p.115.

²²³ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p.169.

²²⁴ Tangl no.78, pp.161-70.

canons of Clofesho.²²⁵ Boniface then went on to discuss the special authority accorded to the archbishop warning against the temptation to abandon episcopal office and quoting from the De Vita Contemplativa of Julianus Pomerius on this theme. He recommended that Cuthbert forbid nuns to make frequent pilgrimages to Rome, attacked the lay lordship of monasteries and commented upon the common English vice of drunkenness, 'an evil peculiar to the heathen and to our race', where he quoted the same words of St Paul as canon twenty one of the Council of Clofesho.²²⁶ The letter was concluded by an attack on the forced labour of monks upon royal buildings.

Whilst it is clear that Boniface possessed a similar conception of the role of a bishop and sought to reform similar abuses as the bishops at Clofesho, difficulties arise as to whether Boniface's Frankish synod was influenced by the Council of Clofesho or whether the reverse was the case. Levison suggested that the Frankish synod of 747, known only through Boniface's letter, influenced Clofesho and based his view on the correspondences already noted.²²⁷ Vollrath argues the opposite stressing that Boniface was deferential to the authority of the English Church and sought to reproduce its metropolitan organisation in his reforms on the continent.²²⁸ There are problems with this view as Patrick Wormald has noted in his defence of

²²⁵ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 3, pp.363-4, canon 25, p.371, canon 19, pp.368-9.

²²⁶ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 21, p.369. Both quote Ephesians 5:18.

²²⁷ Levison, England and the Continent, p.86.

²²⁸ Vollrath, Die Synoden, pp.150-6.

Levison's hypothesis.²²⁹ His argument is based on the fact that if Boniface's opening remarks acknowledge the receipt of the English canons which included an attack on clerical intemperance there would be no need for him to exhort Cuthbert to enact legislation against such a vice. Furthermore, if Boniface had already received canons of an English council, why would he request an exchange of conciliar legislation and not acknowledge the receipt of the canons Cuthbert had already sent ? Earlier Frankish reform councils associated with Boniface and not discussed by Vollrath contain parallels with the legislation of Clofesho. Boniface's first Frankish council of 742/3 set out the principles underlying his reform of the Frankish Church. One of the canons of the Concilium Germanicum required bishops to annually inspect their diocese and extirpate pagan practices as they were similarly instructed by canon three of the Council of Clofesho.²³⁰

Despite these correspondences which suggest that the traditional view should be upheld, a number of differences exist between the canons promulgated by Clofesho and the abuses highlighted within Boniface's letter. Clofesho did not specifically mention bishops when legislating against drunkenness, nor did it forbid nuns from undertaking pilgrimages. It also did not forthrightly condemn the problem of monasteries falling under lay control as noted above. It was not until 749 that Aethelbald issued a privilege at Gumley granting monks immunity from royal works other than bridge-building and the defence of fortifications despite the fact that he

²²⁹ P. Wormald review of Vollrath, Die Synoden, in Catholic Historical Review 73 (1987), pp.431-2.

²³⁰ MGH Conc. II.i, pp.3-4; Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 3, pp.363-4.

had been personally rebuked by Boniface for fornicating ‘in various monasteries with holy nuns and virgins vowed to God’ and plundering churches.²³¹ Boniface was clearly concerned about the conduct of Aethelbald and the abuses evident within the English Church since he ordered that this letter of admonition should be shown to Archbishop Egbert of York in order that he may take action if similar evils occurred among the Northumbrian people.²³²

The canons of the Council of Clofesho and the Legatine report both possess correspondences with further Frankish reforms. The reforming measures carried out by Charlemagne reveal similar concerns as the Council of Clofesho and the decrees of the Papal legates. The Admonitio Generalis of 789 containing eighty-two clauses was concerned with a thorough going plan for the renewal of a Christian society, as was the Council of Clofesho, but it owed more to royal initiative than Clofesho’s legislation.²³³ Like the Herstal Capitulary of 779 and the Admonitio Generalis, the report of the Papal legates was directed to both a clerical and a lay audience. The Admonitio Generalis covered similar themes to the Legatine Synods: preaching, just judgement, peace and concord, prohibitions of idol-worship, homicide and theft. It also used several of the same biblical quotations. The similarities between this royal capitulary and the Legatine Synods have led Wormald to postulate that the report of the papal legates may have formed the basis for the lost law code issued by Offa

²³¹ S 92; Tangl no.73, pp.146-55.

²³² Tangl. no.75, pp.156-58.

²³³ Admonitio Generalis, MGH Cap. I, no. 22, pp.52-62.

mentioned in the preface to Alfred's own law code.²³⁴

The Herstal Capitulary had stressed themes of order, uniformity, authority and obedience. Clerics were to be subject to bishops, bishops to their archbishops. A cleric from one diocese could not move to another, tithes must be paid and monasteries must follow rules.²³⁵ The Admonitio Generalis similarly stressed obedience and hierarchy within the Church and contained a detailed section devoted to the function of the priesthood. Priests were to possess a clear pedagogical function and to live exemplary lives. Bishops were commanded to examine priests to ensure that they correctly celebrated mass and sung the psalms.²³⁶ This concern for the standards of the priesthood became particularly apparent in the reforms carried out in the ninth century under Louis the Pious. The Council of Aachen of 816 emphasised the duty of priests to instruct the laity in the fundamentals of Christian morality²³⁷ and the Council of Arles of 813 instructed every priest to devote himself to pastoral work, administering baptism and other sacraments.²³⁸

The decrees of the Council of Clofesho and the Legatine Synods concerning the need for an educated priesthood to instruct the laity and root out paganism are also echoed in surviving Carolingian episcopal statutes. These survive mostly in later

²³⁴ P. Wormald, 'In Search of King Offa's "Law-Code"', in People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600. Essays in Honour of P.H. Sawyer, ed. I.N. Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp.25-46.

²³⁵ MGH Cap.I, no.20, cc.1, 3-5, 7, pp.47-8.

²³⁶ Admonitio Generalis, MGH Cap. I, no. 22, cc.70-82, pp.59-61. Note esp. c. 70, p.59.

²³⁷ Council of Aachen 816, MGH Conc. II.i, pp.307-464.

²³⁸ Council of Arles 813, MGH Conc. II.i c.3, p.250.

manuscripts and are concerned with the faith, discipline and duties of the priesthood. Important statues included those of Theodulph of Orléans and Hincmar of Rheims.²³⁹ Theodulph of Orléans saw the priest as a shepherd concerned with prayer, reading and ministering to his flock. He urged the necessity for the laity to come to communion as the Council of Clofesho had done.²⁴⁰ The concern of the Legatine Synods to regulate weights and measures was also expressed by the Admonitio Generalis, the Council of Arles of 813 and in the first section of the Council of Paris of 829 which also condemned usury.²⁴¹ At the Council of Meaux-Paris of 845-6, the bishops took it upon themselves to define the role of the king, informing Charles the Bald that he should honour the priests and churches of God, acting as a 'defensor ecclesiae'.²⁴² This reminds one of the section of the Legatine report devoted to the position of the king and his relationship with the clergy.²⁴³ It is also possible to suggest that the Council of Chelsea's attack on Irish wandering clergy was influenced by the Council of Chalons-sur-Marne in 813 which declared null and void the ordination of those ordained by Irish bishops.²⁴⁴ The distinction

²³⁹ Theodulph of Orléans (PL 105 cols 191-224). Hincmar of Rheims (PL 125 cols 773-804). On Frankish episcopal statutes see McKitterick, The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, ch.2.

²⁴⁰ Theodulph of Orléans cc. 1, 28, 32, 33, 35, 46 (PL 105 cols 193, 200-2, 206).

²⁴¹ Admonitio Generalis, MGH Cap. I, no.20, cc. 5, 74, pp.54, 60. Council of Arles 813, MGH Conc. II.i, c.15, p.252; Council of Paris 829, MGH Conc. II.ii, pp.606-80.

²⁴² Council of Meaux-Paris, MGH Cap. II, pp.395-7.

²⁴³ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canons 11, 12, pp.23-4.

²⁴⁴ Council of Chalons-Sur-Marne canon 43 MGH Conc. II.i, p.282. See K. Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age', in England Before the Conquest pp.57, 64-5.

made between monks and canons in the fourth decree of the Legatine Synods contains its closest parallel in canon eleven of the Council of Verneuil of 755.²⁴⁵

These correspondences reveal that the existence of an episcopal self-consciousness, where bishops were bound together through their activity in council and their obedience to the authority of the metropolitan, may also be found amongst the later eighth- and ninth-century Frankish episcopate. The Frankish councils were concerned, like their Anglo-Saxon equivalents, to strengthen and propagate the Christian faith and by so doing to augment the power and enhance the prestige of the episcopal hierarchy which assumed a chief role in undertaking this task. Anglo-Saxon church councils thus added to the cross-cultural interchange which existed between the Frankish kingdoms and England in the eighth and ninth centuries and it has recently been argued that Alcuin, a figure central to this interchange, was instrumental in drafting the decrees of the Legatine report.²⁴⁶ Anglo-Saxon bishops were present at the Council of Frankfurt summoned by Charlemagne in 794 to condemn the Adoptionist heresy.²⁴⁷ Their own councils had cultivated recognition

²⁴⁵ MGH Cap. I, no.14, c.11, p.35.

²⁴⁶ Cubitt, 'Anglo-Saxon Church Councils', ch.7 discusses this at length. Her argument is partly based upon accepting that Alcuin was the author of the second half of the *Admonitio Generalis* as advocated by F.C. Sheibe, 'Alcuin und die Admonitio Generalis', *Deutsches Archiv* 14 (1958), pp.221-229. She stresses a connection between the Gelasian views of the Legatine report and Alcuin's letters to Archbishop Aethelheard (Dümmler no.17) and Archbishop Eanbald II (Dümmler no.114), notes Alcuin's concern for the moral demise of Northumbria in letters to Aethelred of Northumbria (Dümmler no.16) and Eardwulf of Northumbria (Dümmler no.108) and points to a use of similar Biblical citations in Alcuin's works and the report.

²⁴⁷ MGH Cap. I, no.28, pp.73-8; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987), pp.434-444.

of their influence and prestige.

By creating their own image of the nature and function of the episcopate, the bishops in council also further developed the connections between the Anglo-Saxon Church and Rome. From its inception the Anglo-Saxon Church had possessed a close relationship with Rome which found expression through its loyalty to the author of the Augustinian mission, Gregory the Great.²⁴⁸ The extant decrees of Anglo-Saxon councils were concerned to strengthen and deepen this relationship. One of the central themes with which the bishops in council were concerned was that of unity. They sought to bind themselves and the English Church together through common devotion to the see of Rome. The Council of Clofesho was opened by Archbishop Cuthbert publicly reciting the writings of Pope Zachary after which the bishops contemplated their office 'in the Homilies of the blessed Father Gregory, and in the canonical decrees of the holy fathers, as in a bright mirror.'²⁴⁹ At this council Cuthbert desired to enact legislation which would standardise the observance of festivals according to Roman customs. The manner of singing was to be in accordance with 'the written copy which we have from the Roman Church' and the natiivities of the saints were to be 'venerably kept on the same day, according to the martyrology of the Roman Church, with their proper psalmody.'²⁵⁰ Appeals to the authority of the Roman Church are made throughout the canons of the Council

²⁴⁸ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the Early English Church, Some Questions of Transmission', in his Early Medieval History (Oxford, 1975), pp.115-37; P. Meyvaert, Bede and Gregory the Great, (Jarrow Lecture, 1964).

²⁴⁹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III, pp.362-3.

²⁵⁰ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 13, p.367.

dealing with the observance of the seven canonical hours of prayer, the keeping of Rogation days and of Ember fasts.²⁵¹ With regard to fasts, the people were to be 'informed of them every year before they begin, that they may know and observe the established fasts of the Universal Church, and that they may all do it in a uniform manner, and make no difference in the observance; but take care to celebrate it according to the rites of the Roman Church.'²⁵²

The concern of the episcopate to bind itself together through binding itself closer to the see of Rome is revealed through the Legatine report. The sending of the legates themselves reveals this as does the appeal to ancient canonical tradition in the opening canon.²⁵³ The bishops were anxious to acquire a unified church to prevent the possibility of schism and therefore wished to ensure that the 'synodical decrees of the six general Councils with the decrees of the Roman pontiffs, be often read with attention, and that the state of the Church be reformed according to the pattern described therein.'²⁵⁴ The manner in which councils were used to cultivate an image of the power and prestige of the metropolitan see also served to strengthen the ties between the English episcopate and Rome. The metropolitan was dependent upon the see of Rome because it was from Rome that the pallium, the symbol of the archbishop's authority, was received and before receiving it the archbishop had to

²⁵¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 15, p.367, canon 16, p.368, canon 18, p.368.

²⁵² Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canon 18, p.368.

²⁵³ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 1, p.21.

²⁵⁴ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 4, p.22.

make a profession of faith to the Pope.²⁵⁵ Due to the fact that the metropolitan was closely tied to the Papacy in this way, any attempt to enhance his authority involved Rome. The Council of Clofesho of 803 which abolished the metropolitan see of Lichfield and returned it to Canterbury where the archbishop was to make a renewed effort to express his power at the Council of Chelsea in 816, relied upon the intervention of Pope Leo III who alone could authorise the creation and dismemberment of an metropolitan see.²⁵⁶ He was called upon to act after the archbishop of Canterbury visited Rome itself.²⁵⁷

The activities of bishops in council thus need to be viewed from a continental as well as an insular perspective. In seeking to develop an image of themselves as the guardians of a Christian society through systematic reform of the lives of clergy and laity found most fully in the decrees of the Council of Clofesho and the Legatine Synods, the Anglo-Saxon bishops enhanced their connections with the continent and in so doing enhanced their own position at home. Their reforming impulse may well have had repercussions on the continent which have been undervalued in studies of the Carolingian reforms.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Levison, England and the Continent, pp.18-22.

²⁵⁶ Council of Clofesho 803 HS III, pp.542-3. BCS 310.

²⁵⁷ ASC 799.

²⁵⁸ For example R. McKitterick writes in The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, p.49, 'The Anglo-Saxon and Celtic ideal was more austere and ascetic, its ultimate aims were spiritual ones, and there was less emphasis on the pastoral role of the clergy, more of their efforts being devoted to the foundation of monasteries... rather than to the extension of a closely supervised parochial organisation as part of a diocesan oriented church which was peculiarly characteristic of the Carolingian reform programme.' This is partially true but it is an over-simplification as the conciliar decrees make quite clear.

Church councils reveal the importance of the episcopate in the life of the English Church. Bishops were the chief protagonists at these regular meetings of clergy and it was through such meetings that the episcopate found a voice and an identity of its own. The evidence suggests that councils were a common feature of the ongoing life of the church. They met at regular meeting places such as Clofesho, Chelsea and Aclea and showed that the episcopate was a body with its own traditions and mechanisms. At councils, bishops projected an image of themselves as the guardians of a Christian society. They stood at the head of a hierarchy and sought to control and regulate the life of the church and the ongoing process through which English society was Christianised. The early Anglo-Saxon Church and its bishops have been viewed largely through a monastic lens chiefly due to the writings of Bede. This monastic view of episcopal authority was important but it was by no means the only view of the episcopate which existed. Church councils and ecclesiastical legislation show that a hierarchically organised episcopal Church existed in early Anglo-Saxon England. Its bishops were not merely the dumb creations of monastic hagiographers. They could speak and when they did so they sought to define and delineate their role to those who would hear them.

CONCLUSION.

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY ANGLO-SAXON EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY

At the heart of the early Anglo-Saxon Church stood its bishops. Bishops occupied a central place within Church and community. They alone could confirm, ordain priests and abbots and consecrate the oil used in the anointing of the sick.¹ By the beginning of the ninth century they personally expressed their right to appoint abbots and abbesses and retain control over communities of *monasteria*.² Venerated as saints through hagiography which created and advertised their cults and the relics associated with them, they brooded over the Church as warriors of God. Those who created images of episcopal authority in early Anglo-Saxon England, whether operating within the episcopal hierarchy or outside it, were men of great power and influence. They could generate and control a picture of the episcopate in accordance with their own interests and concerns. Images of bishops in the early Anglo-Saxon Church were thus deliberately used to serve the specific needs of the specific group of people responsible for creating them. Authors of texts were responsible for the picture of the episcopate which they created. The definitions of episcopal authority offered by various texts reflected the background, milieu and interests of the authors of the texts themselves.

Those who wrote about bishops from outside the ranks of the episcopate

¹ Bede, *In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121, pp.221-2; *In Marcum*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, p.443; Theodore, *Penitential* HS III, II.iii, 2, 4-5, 8; II.iv.5, pp.192-93.

² Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 4, pp.580-81.

created an image of episcopal authority in hagiographical and historical writing. They were concerned not only with the historical role of their subjects and how their exemplary lives had led to the attainment of their sanctity but also with providing an interpretation of the nature of that sanctity itself. Passages in their works which extolled the virtues of episcopal saints were carefully selected and composed to provide a detailed theoretical statement concerning the nature of episcopal sanctity. Bede, the anonymous author of the first Life of St Cuthbert and Eddius Stephanus were all monks who wrote most immediately for monastic audiences. They belonged to specific, individual religious communities and the images of episcopal authority which they created articulated the values and served the specific ends of these communities.

Lindisfarne, Wearmouth-Jarrow, Hexham and Ripon were monastic communities which showed a high regard for episcopacy and an understanding of its role. Monastic communities in promoting or sanctioning the cults of episcopal saints acknowledged, supported and reinforced the social dominance of the episcopate in the early Anglo-Saxon Church. They also gave voice to their own interpretation of the nature of episcopal office and its relationship to Anglo-Saxon society. It is not difficult to understand why they were concerned about the nature of episcopal authority. Lindisfarne, Hexham and Ripon all contained episcopal sees and only Ripon did not manage to retain its bishop. They transferred monastic values onto the episcopate, for them the ideal bishop was and remained a monk. These communities did not exist in isolation. They were closely connected to monastic communities in Ireland and Gaul from where they received knowledge of hagiography which

promoted the cults of Irish and Gallic saints. Iona, Luxeuil and Lindisfarne belonged to an interconnected world transcending particularism.³ The contacts which monastic houses possessed gave them access both to the Christian traditions which had developed in the peculiarly monastic character of the Irish Church and also to the traditions which were associated with the world of the Christian Mediterranean.

Hagiographical texts utilised literary models. Although they drew upon the actual life of the saints themselves in order to create their picture of episcopal authority, they also related the careers of these episcopal saints to a retrospective tradition. They were motivated by the moral purpose of recounting how all saints must conform to an established model. Their content was thus standardised, 'hagiography depended for its intelligibility upon its conformity to convention.'⁴ Every episcopal saint stood as a model of virtue cast in a mould which could be traced back through the Vitae of earlier saints such as Martin of Tours or Athanasius' Life of St Antony ultimately to the apostles and then to Christ himself. However, monastic authors did not agree about the manner in which Christ-likeness was manifested in the lives of episcopal saints.

Bede emphasised the manner in which since its inception the early Anglo-Saxon Church had been conceived as a Church which was ruled over and governed by bishops. The figure of the monastic bishop provided Bede with a means by which he could narrate the conversion history of the various early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

³ A.T. Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background to Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiography', (Unpublished D. Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), p.335.

⁴ S. Ridyard, The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults (Cambridge, 1988), p.10.

in the Historia Ecclesiastica, emphasising the manner in which such kingdoms received Christianity through the alliance of kings with episcopal figures. Bishops had provided Bede with much of his source material concerning the establishment of the Church in England. Since he was dependent upon them for his knowledge of the character of the early Anglo-Saxon Church, his account reflected episcopal interests and concerns. Bede intentionally wrote from a retrospective perspective. By appealing to witness, he established his authority as a historian. His work did not draw upon a single source, written or oral, but combined information from a series of sources. By carefully selecting and combining various sources he was able to offer an interpretation of episcopal authority.

Bede carefully enunciated a view of episcopal authority which was related to the bishop's ability to combine the ascetic life of solitude, renunciation of the values of the world, and the study of the scriptures with the active life of preaching and ministering to his flock. Pastoral authority was not an alternative to a life of ascetic discipline but rather a necessary component of it. Bishops did not live double lives as ascetics and pastors. Their ability to move inward to embrace a life of contemplation and meditation centred around the creation and formation of a group of ascetic disciples was linked to their ability to move outward to operate within the wider community and ensure that laity and clergy alike were aware of their gifts. Bishops were shown to have been influenced by a desert, anchoritic model of the ascetic life which stressed the need to flee the world and to adopt a life of solitude, battling against demons and the flesh. Aidan, Cuthbert and John of Beverley all

possessed retreats where they would engage in prayer and meditation.⁵ However, Bede had also absorbed a pattern of sanctity which stressed a social and communal form of asceticism marked by the need to live in and serve a community rather than to pursue a life of solitude. He thus sought to balance and reconcile these two modes of sanctity, adopting the predominant picture of Cuthbert as a solitary figure found in the anonymous Life of the saint by showing how Cuthbert worked and operated in relation to his fellows. He also praised the early archbishops of Canterbury for their ability to live with their clergy and pursue scholarly pursuits in a communal regime.

The outward-going movement of bishops to embrace the needs of their flocks finds its fullest meaning in Bede's analysis of the work of bishops in the conversion process and their ability to work miracles. The ability of bishops to work miracles helped Bede to define and locate episcopal authority. By performing miracles, bishops moved among the laity and clergy giving tangible expression to the divine acknowledgment of their gifts. The petitioning of bishops by laity and clergy in order to secure cures from illness created a system of hierarchy and dependence where bishops challenged existing bonds of association, acting as a holy alternative to the doctors which could often be found at their sees. However, Bede did not stress that all bishops were able to work miracles. He distinguished between those bishops who could work miracles in a personal context whilst alive and those bishops whose ability to work miracles occurred after their deaths by means of relics associated with their name. He further distinguished between bishops such as John of Beverley who

⁵ HE III.16; IV.27-29; V.2; VCA III.1-7; IV.11; VCP 11, 17-22, 36-38.

worked miracles in a specifically pastoral and episcopal context, and those such as Chad whose ability to work miracles was related more to his reputation as an ascetic than to his episcopal role. Although aware that miracles were important in conversion, Bede was also aware that the power to perform miracles was not the only sign of sanctity. Theodore was therefore praised not for his ability to work miracles but for his ability to reform the diocesan organisation of the early English Church.

A different model of how early Anglo-Saxon bishops were shown to possess an authority based upon their ability to live in conformity with the life of Christ himself was enunciated by Eddius Stephanus in the highly polemical Vita Wilfridi. Highly educated and well-informed about the exegetical techniques used in Bede's biblical commentaries through his contact with Bede's major patron, Bishop Acca of Hexham, Stephanus' theological convictions about the nature of episcopal authority differed from those of Bede and the anonymous monk of Lindisfarne. Bede and the anonymous monk had both described bishops whose authority was related to their ability to pursue a life of ascetic self-denial. When they interacted with the secular world they often moved awkwardly within it and were anxious to flee its demands. Eddius Stephanus perceived that Wilfrid's episcopal authority was fundamentally related to his ability to operate within the world, suffering and overcoming persecution at the hands of both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. For Stephanus evil existed in the world in the form of enemies who sought to thwart Wilfrid's activities. Evil broke the bonds of community and created tension and destruction in social relationships. Wilfrid suffered expulsion and exile because of his obedience to the customs, values and practices of the Roman Church. His ability to endure

suffering and to overcome it led to his eventual triumph when he returned to his episcopal see and harmony was restored.

Stephanus' conception of episcopal authority as an authority which was defined through the suffering of persecution was influenced by his vast Biblical knowledge both of the canonical books of scripture and of apocryphal writings. It was also influenced by models of martyrdom derived from Gaul and Rome. Bede had not shown bishops to be persecuted figures. He had located evil not in the world of social relationships but in the harsh austerities of the natural world. Cuthbert's ability to drive the demons from Farne island expressed his ability to overcome the natural world and to master it.⁶ Bede was more concerned with a concept of martyrdom which did not necessarily involve death but which involved acquiring a status akin to a martyr by undergoing moral struggle. Wilfrid's authority also found expression in his ability to act as a father figure to his followers. He gained a reputation as a teacher because of his strong knowledge of canon law and devotion to Rome. He was known for his ability to dispense his vast wealth in the form of charity and to encourage ecclesiastical building programmes. He also acted to defend the members of his communities after his death by miraculously protecting them from attack.⁷

Alcuin did not write from a monastic perspective. He had been educated in a cathedral see and celebrated his education and the see of York in his York poem. This poem served to provide a picture of the internal orderings of a cathedral see. Alcuin did not define episcopal authority on a solely personal level but related

⁶ VCP 17; VCM 15; HE IV.28.

⁷ VW 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 16-17, 22, 29-33, 46-47, 52-53, 66-68.

episcopal figures to their attachment to a specific place, the urban context of an episcopal see. Just as Bede in the Historia Abbatum and the anonymous author of the Vita Ceolfredi had written of a monastic community and sought to maintain the integrity of that community, Alcuin utilised their examples to write about an episcopal community. Alcuin's York poem served as a justification of York's acquisition of metropolitan status in 735. In it he praised bishops who had managed to develop a central role as leaders of an urban community. They acted as benefactors to the community, building up the prestige of the old Roman foundation of York by supplying it with treasures and building churches. They also dispensed charity to the community. By co-operating with kings, the bishop heroes of Alcuin's poem provided a model which he urged should be taken up by the bishops and kings of his own day. The York poem thus sought to be a contribution to an ideal of ecclesiastical reform through the manner in which its portrayal of ecclesiastical and secular harmony, achieved by the alliance between bishops and kings, stood in contrast to the dissension and disaster of the latter half of the eighth century detailed in Alcuin's correspondence. Alcuin was heavily influenced by Bede but only the early part of his poem drew upon Bede's works. In the early part of the poem Alcuin described the miracles worked by the bishops, John of Beverley, Wilfrid and Cuthbert. However, in the later part of his work he was not concerned with the part played by the miraculous in defining episcopal authority and concentrated upon the acts of benefaction undertaken by the eighth century bishops including his mentor Archbishop Aelberht.

The episcopal compilers of early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical synodal

legislation gave bishops an independent voice in the Church. By articulating an ideological programme concerned with standardising ecclesiastical practices, reforming the standards of the clergy and teaching the laity Christian wisdom, bishops established themselves as the architects of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. They sought to promote their own authority to act as the setters of ritual and to espouse an ideal of reform. Anglo-Saxon church councils, the Dialogues of Archbishop Egbert of York and the Penitential associated with Archbishop Theodore all envisaged bishops at the forefront of the Church. Ecclesiastical legislation particularly served to heighten the hierarchical structure of the Church and to stress the authority of the metropolitan see of Canterbury. The surviving synodal decrees of the eighth and ninth centuries stressed the power of the archbishop over his suffragans and the archbishop's role in convening and presiding over the debate of councils. Bishops were the chief pastors in the Church and sought to control the organisation of parochial ministry through ordaining priests to serve specific charges and examining the moral probity of all candidates selected for ordination. Although inmates of *monasteria* possessed a pastoral role, ecclesiastical office appears to have been central to the pastoral structure of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Thus the pastorate consisted of bishops and various members of the ordained clergy. The pastoral role of monks appears largely to have been confined to deeds performed within *monasteria* themselves through preaching, the dispensing of charity and the promotion of the cult of saints. The concept of pastoral care was viewed from a personal rather than from an institutional perspective. Pastoral duties did not devolve upon institutions or communities but upon individuals by virtue of the status they

held in the Church.⁸

In hagiographical and historical texts composed by monks, the ideal bishop was and remained imbued with monastic ideals. Ecclesiastical legislation, however, actively sought to distinguish more fully between various types of clergy within the Church rather than to combine the monastic and episcopal ideals. It placed greater value upon the figure of the bishop and the ordained clergy than upon the monk as is evident from the penitential practices set out in Theodore's Penitential and Egbert's Dialogues.⁹ In making a distinction between secular clerks and monks in a decree of the 786 Legatine Synods, early Anglo-Saxon bishops laid the foundation for the work of the tenth-century monastic reform movement which drew sharper distinctions between members of the clergy.¹⁰ However, the decrees of church councils also differed from the concerns of the later monastic reformers because they did not use the term *clericus* in a pejorative sense and did not perceive secular clerks to be characterised by spiritual wickedness and depravity. Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical legislation sought to promote the power wielded by bishops over communities of *monasteria*. This stemmed in part from the practice whereby individual secular families gained control of monastic property and established 'family monasteries' to promote a particular saint's cult and to free themselves from burdens associated with

⁸ C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care and the Conciliar Canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in Pastoral Care Before the Parish, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), p.206.

⁹ Egbert, Dialogues HS III cc.1, 12, pp.404, 408-9; Theodore Penitential HS III I.i.2-3, iv.5; II.ii, II.vi, pp.177, 180, 191-2, 195-6.

¹⁰ Legatine Synods 786 Dümmler, no.3 canon 4, p.22.

secular land-holding. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the existence of 'family monasteries' was forthrightly condemned by the early Anglo-Saxon episcopate. This was because of a recognition that monasticism had always assumed a family character. Some family monasteries such as that at Withington were tolerated by the episcopal hierarchy and not necessarily considered bogus or second-rate. Episcopal initiative in securing the reversion of monastic property to the episcopal see should be related to the growing power and wealth of bishops in the later eighth and early ninth centuries.

By strengthening themselves through conciliar activity bishops gained power and a voice. They secured control over monastic property to prevent the power of kings and nobles from becoming too strong. The bishopric of Worcester managed to achieve this with some degree of success. Ecclesiastical legislation further reveals the ties which existed between the early Anglo-Saxon Church and the continent. The elaborate reforming programme enunciated at councils such as the council of Clofesho of 747 with its emphasis upon unity, orthodoxy and liturgical standardisation points forward to the Carolingian reforms of the later eighth and ninth centuries. Furthermore ecclesiastical legislation managed to draw the early Anglo-Saxon Church not only closer to the Frankish world but also closer to Rome by insisting that Roman customs and practices became standard in the Church.

Episcopal authority in the early Anglo-Saxon Church was marked both by unity and diversity. Definitions of episcopal authority emphasised the manner in which bishops were unified through common commitment to the values, standards and practices of the Roman Church. Those who remained attached to the Celtic

Church such as Aidan, although praised by Bede for the exemplary status of their lives, were condemned for their separatism and disobedience. All the texts examined placed bishops within a firmly Roman context. Eddius Stephanus praised Wilfrid for his attachment to Roman orthodoxy and canon law. It was through the support of the papacy that Wilfrid was able to eventually triumph over his enemies. Alcuin's York poem was much more firmly Romanist in its sentiments than Bede's writings had been. He effectively re-wrote the early history of the Church in Northumbria to provide it with a thoroughly Roman past and omitted Celtic bishops from his analysis of the saints of York. Ecclesiastical legislators drew the Church into a Roman orbit by insisting that Gregory the Great's feast day was observed, the Roman martyrology was used and Roman styles of chanting were followed.¹¹

All the texts examined were also united by the shared concern that bishops stood at the apex of the pyramid of ecclesiastical responsibility and were responsible for every aspect of Church life. Bishops were expected to be effective preachers and teachers fulfilling their role at the centre of the processes of Christianisation and depaganisation. They were also to be obedient and humble, inspiring kings and other clergy by their exemplary lives. Bede had shown that the work of conversion was carried out in the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms by bishops who undertook the task of preaching. He had shown his continued commitment to the central place occupied by bishops in the early Anglo-Saxon Church by urging a bishop, Egbert of York, to undertake the task of reforming the Church in Northumbria by securing the creation of further bishoprics and ordaining further priests to carry out the work of teaching.

¹¹ Council of Clofesho 747 HS III canons 13, 15-18, pp.367-68.

Wilfrid was also shown to be an effective teacher in the Vita Wilfridi and Alcuin exhorted the bishops of his own day to encourage learning within their communities and to effectively put that learning into practice through preaching.

However, episcopal authority was also marked by diversity. Bede, writing from a monastic perspective heavily influenced by the values and ideals of the Benedictine Rule praised bishops who pursued a life of poverty. Thus the monastic bishops of Lindisfarne were revered for their renunciation of worldly goods and property. Alcuin and Eddius Stephanus, however, both showed bishops to be men of munificence and wealth. Alcuin's bishops were marked by their concern not only for the spiritual welfare of the community of York but also for their ability to look out for the community's material and political interests. They possessed great wealth but were praised for using this wealth in the correct context to build up the church through providing it with gifts. Alcuin praised bishops who had inherited wealth and prestige through their contacts with the aristocracy. Archbishop Egbert combined spiritual talent with impressive aristocratic connections, ruling the church of York whilst his brother, Eadberht, ruled as king of Northumbria he ensured that the kingdom was governed harmoniously. Eddius Stephanus also described a bishop who was actively involved in patronage of the church through the building and endowing of churches. Wilfrid's wealth was a sign of the respect he had earned as a bishop and was channelled back into his communities, given to the poor, and given back to Rome.¹²

¹² On the importance of treasure in early England see especially C.R. Dodwell, Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective (Manchester, 1982) and J. Campbell, 'The Sale of Land and the Economics of Power in Early England: Problems and Possibilities', Haskins Society

Diversity also characterised the manner in which bishops were treated in relation to their sees. For Bede the personal, monastic character of the bishop and his individual spiritual probity mattered more than the location of his see. Nurtured in a monastic environment he had absorbed ideas about ecclesiastical structures derived from Ireland where bishops possessed a strong monastic character and the sites of sees were relatively unimportant. However, he had also absorbed the values of the Roman Church and therefore praised Gregory the Great's plan to create metropolitan sees in old Roman civic centres, looking to the plan when he wrote to Archbishop Egbert advocating the need to divide existing dioceses and create more sees. Alcuin, more thoroughly Romanist in his outlook and influenced by the urban traditions of the continental church, saw the civic character of the bishop as a far more important element in his power and authority. By protecting and defending cities, bishops fulfilled functions similar to secular figures and proclaimed their power to act as patrons of an urban community.

Ecclesiastical figures who created images of episcopal authority in early Anglo-Saxon England were conscious of the power of the written word. As a learned elite those within the Church were aware of the manner in which literacy possessed a functional, practical purpose and could be used in the context of the government and administration of the Church. This is evident from the decrees of church councils which show the episcopate's commitment to the use of writing to legitimate and

Journal 1 (1989), pp.23-37. In P.F. Jones, A Concordance to the Historia Ecclesiastica of Bede (Cambridge, Mass., 1929) there are only ten references to gold. Three of these references occur in the epitaph on Wilfrid quoted from the inscription found at Ripon and not itself composed by Bede.

consolidate episcopal authority. Written documents were fundamental to the workings of law and provided records detailing grants of ecclesiastical land. It was an awareness of the importance of written records in settling disputes about ecclesiastical land that led the compilers of the Council of Chelsea of 816 to urge bishops to ensure that they retained written evidence of their entitlement to land as a means of defence against fraudulent claims.¹³

Ecclesiastics were also aware of the intellectual or ideological use of literacy as well as the practical and functional use of literacy.¹⁴ By producing learned examinations of the nature and character of the episcopate in hagiographical and historical writing they wrote for a specific community of people conversant with the special skills and knowledge required to understand the ideas contained within their texts. However, orality retained its central place within early Anglo-Saxon England and it is the presence of oral culture which has raised questions about the extent to which the early Anglo-Saxon Church was fundamentally aristocratic in character and only popular in the sense that it aimed its ideas at the common people, not in the sense that they were derived from them.¹⁵

It is difficult to attempt to firmly identify an autonomous elite culture and an

¹³ Council of Chelsea 816 HS III canon 7, p.582.

¹⁴ For the distinction between these two types of literacy see R. McKitterick, ed., The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe (Cambridge, 1990), p.320.

¹⁵ D.W. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1989), ch.4; S. Ridyard, Royal Saints. Compare the remark of J.M. Wallace Hadrill writing about the Frankish Church, 'In other words, we are faced with a very elaborate literary exercise designed to harness and propagate cults that looked more "popular" than what they were.' J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (Oxford, 1983), p.78.

autonomous popular culture and then to speculate about which influenced the other. It seems clear that ideas about saints cults and about the role of bishops in early Anglo-Saxon society developed from interaction between social classes. Bede seems to have been aware of the impact of popular devotion in formulating the cult of saints although his remarks about Cuthbert's anxiety concerning crowds petitioning him for favour at his tomb suggest that he was wary of this influence and anxious to control it.¹⁶ He wrote primarily for a cultural and social elite not, it would appear, out of any sense of cultural superiority but out of an awareness that it was only through such an elite and its access to the written word that early Anglo-Saxon society could be effectively reformed through the promotion of Christian values.

Eddius Stephanus' text appears to have operated on a number of different levels according to the outlook and intellectual sophistication of those who would read it or hear it read aloud in a liturgical context. For some literacy was not essential to an understanding of Wilfrid's career and influence because accounts of important events in the life of Wilfrid were available to illiterates through visual forms of communication. Documents in early Anglo-Saxon England possessed connections with highly visible rituals which symbolically legitimated the uses to which the document was put. Wilfrid's building programmes and benefaction therefore ensured that he was associated with specific churches and objects which could remind people of his patronage and work. However, Stephanus' text could also serve to encourage and edify a highly literate audience. Ecclesiastics, particularly those few acquainted with Bede's exegetical methods, could see it as a document

¹⁶ VCP 37.

possessing multiple levels of meaning and perceive Wilfrid from an allegorical perspective as a representative of Roman order and values. A handful of secular nobles could identify with a saint who operated as a warrior and had absorbed elements of a culture traditionally considered Germanic and warlike.

Through its elaborate metrical form, Alcuin's York poem primarily directed itself towards an elite although like Bede, Alcuin appears to have written for such a group through his awareness that their power and influence could reform the Church as a whole. The extent to which bishops were aware of Bede and Alcuin's desire for ecclesiastical reform is evident from the decrees of church councils. Church councils were obviously influenced by interaction between social classes since they condemned practices believed to be present among the lives of ordinary believers such as the combination of Christian modes of worship with practices believed to be pagan. Alcuin's letters did the same and suggest that the austere regime of penitential discipline recommended by ecclesiastical legislation was not taken up by many of the laity who continued to practice a different 'form' of Christianity than that of bishops and monks. However, although the effectiveness of ecclesiastical legislation should not be exaggerated it is clear that by the beginning of the ninth century early Anglo-Saxon England could claim to be fundamentally a Christian community. By promoting Christian values, standardising ecclesiastical practices and bringing *monasteria* under their control, bishops had moved in the direction of providing early Anglo-Saxon society with a Christian sense of identity based upon loyalty towards an episcopally organised Church. The propaganda of the tenth-century monastic reformers which has tended to undervalue the importance of the episcopate at the

expense of monastic communities should not blind us to their achievements.

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